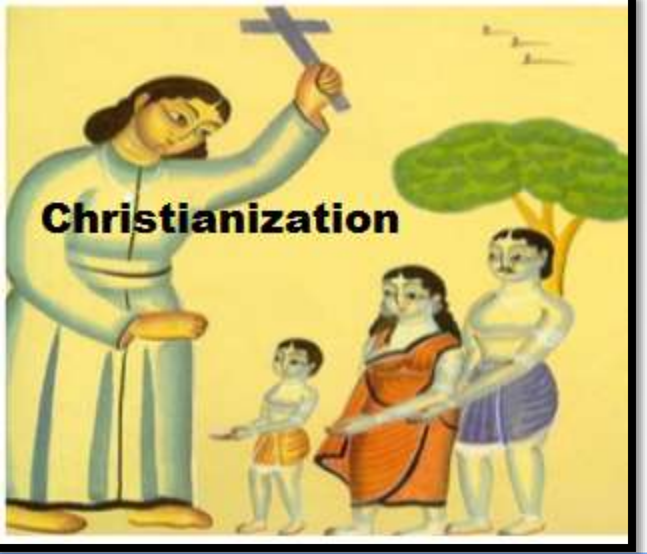
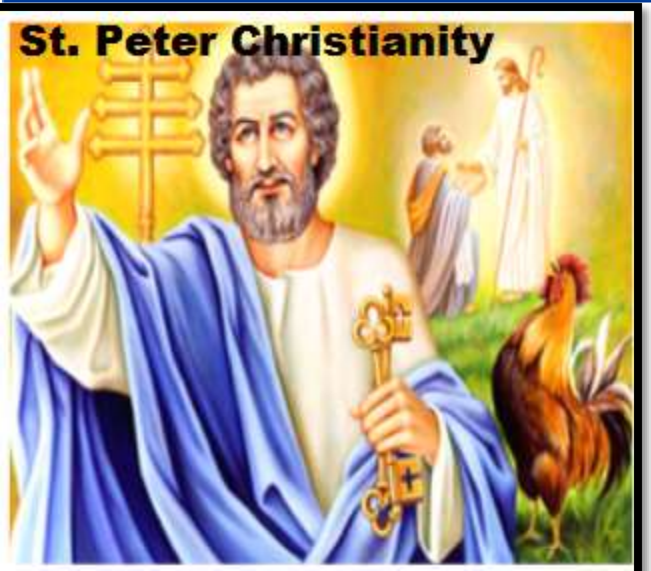
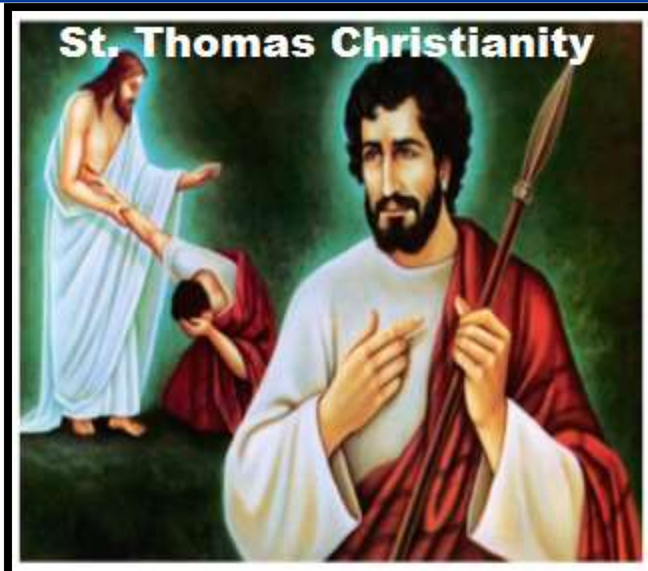


History of Christianity in India

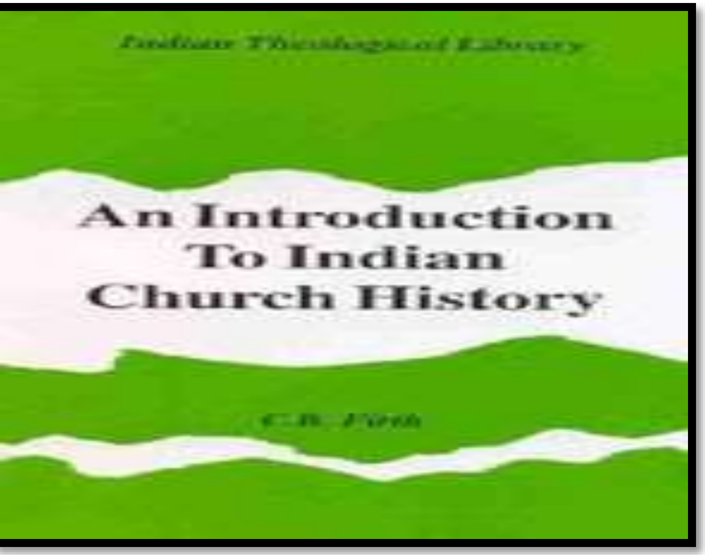
From the Beginning to the End of the 17th Century…

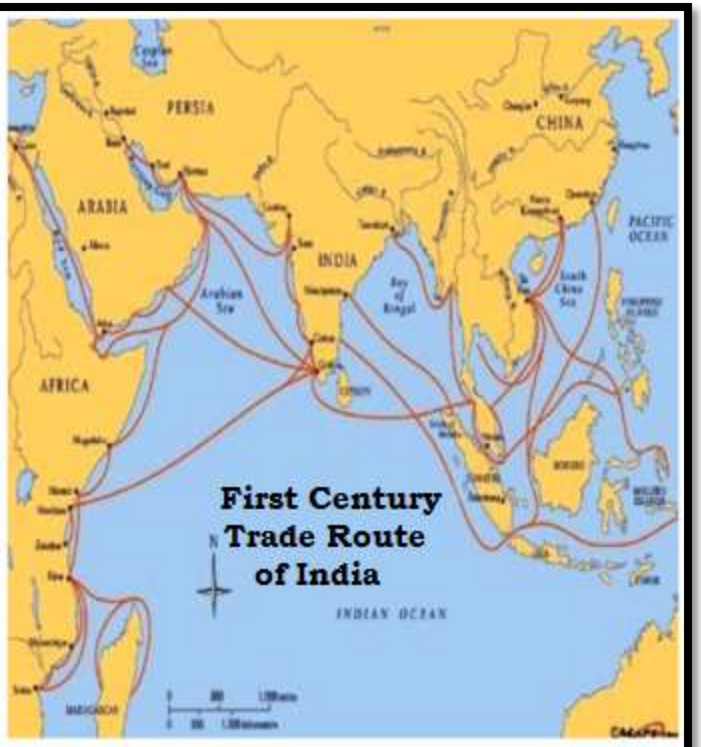


Presented by
Rev. D. David
Lesson: 6
Part – One



India during the First Century AD Context:



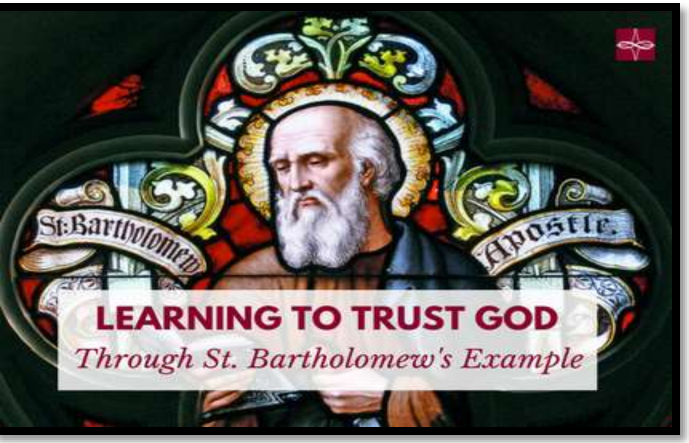


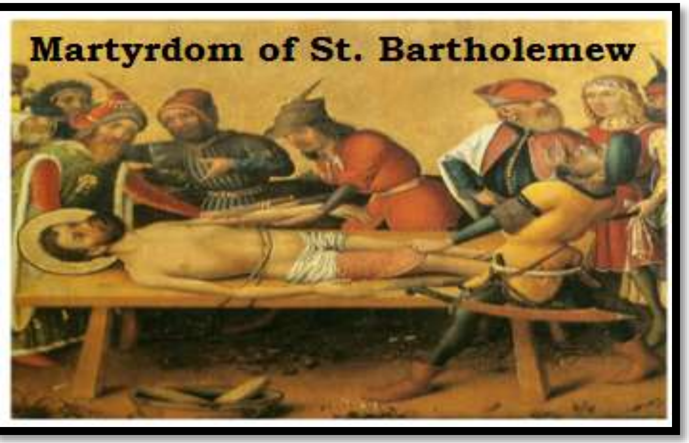
- **India**: India a subcontinent is protected on three sides by water and in the north is the high mountain ranges- the Himalayas. Though the Himalayas have been a great barrier, there are a few passes such as **Khyber** and **Bolan** which have served as links with the outside world.
- **Aryans in India**: The Aryans came to India between 2000-1500 BC, the Greeks in the 4th century BC, and the Khusans in the 1st AD, the Huns in the 5th century AD and the Muslims from 12th century AD. So the history of North India can be said to be a history of the conquests of outsiders who came through the North-West passes of Khyber and Bolan.
- **World Trades**: There was regular sea trade between Egypt and Indian ports. India supplies of fine cotton and silk fabric, spices, indigo, sugar, drugs, precious stones and many curious works of art from India in exchange of gold and silver. India traded with Romans, Egyptians, Arabs, Syrians and Persians.
- **Religious Tolerance in Ancient India**: The trade between India and other countries led to a lot of give and take, religiously, culturally and socially. The kings of ancient India never enforced their religious beliefs upon people. People of that period kept an open mind on religious matters and were willing to learn from one another. Interactions and exchange of ideas among scholars of various faiths in the form of debates and discussions was a regular feature of ancient India. In this context, Christianity came to India.

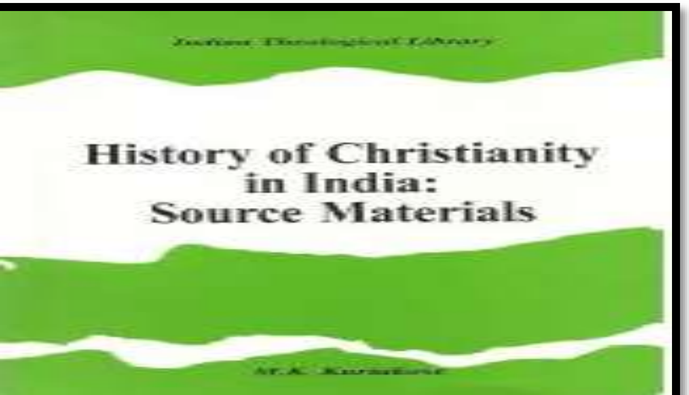
Introduction

- **Socio-cultural and Political Background of Tamil Nadu:**: South India was divided among the three well known dynasties namely, the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas. The port of Cranganore (Muziris) comes under Cheras Dynasty of Tamil Nadu.
- **Origin:** The Origin of Christianity in India unfortunately is shrouds by mystery. There is very little documentary evidence about the early history of in the Christian community of India. So one has to rely primarily on the tradition of the Community.
- **Beginning of Christianity in India:** At least two opinions prevails and the popular opinion is that Christianity was brought to India by Apostle Thomas at 52 AD and the other opinion is that Christianity was brought by a group of Christians migrating from Syria at 345AD.
- **Jews in Kerala:** From 10th century BCE, the Jews had business dealing with the Malabar coastal regions and there were Synagogues and colonies for the Jews in some of those places. More than 10,000 Jews were settled in Cranganore, Cochin, Quilon and certain other trade centres of Kerala.
- **St. Thomas in India:** He came to Cranganore in 52 AD stayed in the Jewish colony. St. Thomas converted many of them to Christianity. Hence a major group of the early Christians of India could be converts from Judaism.

The Tradition of St. Bartholomew in India

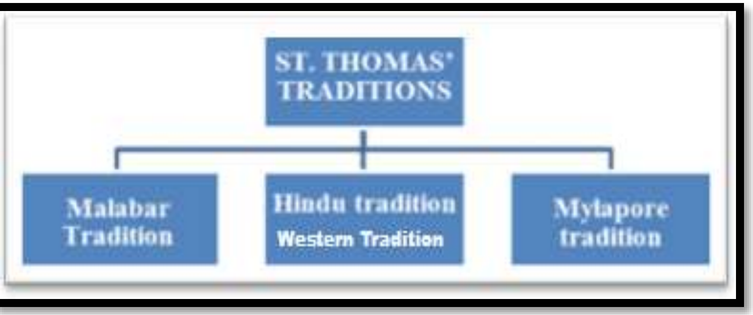






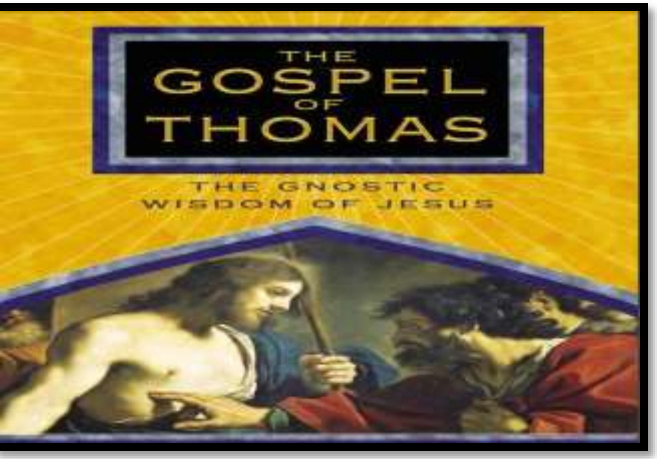
- **Bartholomew in India**: Bartholomew came to India before St. Thomas's arrival. He visited Bombay region to the Konkan coast. He preached in the country and converted Polymius the king who ordered removal of the idol of Astrauth from the chief temple of the city and built houses of prayer. Later Bartholomew proceeded to Persia and became martyrdom. His body was buried in the monastery across Tabris(Iraq).
- **Witness of Eusebius**: Eusebius of Caesaria (314 AD) says that Pantaenus of Alexandria, the head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria went to India to preach Christianity (190 AD) and that there he found a copy of the Gospel according to Matthew written in Hebrew left behind by St. Bartholomew, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, and that he Pantaenus took it back to Alexandria.
- **Witness of St. Jerome**: St. Jerome (384 AD) mention about the Christian Topography of the traveller Cosmos (6th Century) visited India between AD 520 and 525 refer to Christian community with a church; at Kalyan there was a bishop appointed and sent from Persia in 345 AD.
- **Conclusion**: The presence of Jews in Kalyan coast, Mumbai, suggests that the possibility of St. Bartholomew coming to Kalyan, to present the gospel of Christ to them. The Bartholomew Christians continued as a separate community till the coming of the Portuguese and then got merged with the Christians of Bombay.

The Tradition about St. Thomas in North India



- **St. Thomas in India:** St Thomas was universally believed to have arrived in AD 52 from Palestine by boat; that he had travelled down the Red Sea and across the Persian Gulf, and that he landed at the great Kerala port of Cranganore. **Three Tractions:** We have three traditional(un proved) views about St Thomas ministry in India. They are Malabar Tradition of Kerala, Western Tradition of North India and Mylapore Tradition of Tamil Nadu.
- **Malabar Tradition:** It is based on the oral tradition that St. Thomas came by sea, and first landed at Cranganore in 52 AD. Initially, he preached to the Jews and made converts both among them and converted high caste Hindu families in Kerala. Later, he crossed over to China and preached the gospel; returned to India and organized the leading families he had converted, and erected seven churches in Maliankara, Palayur, Parur, Gokamnfalam, Niranam, Chayal and Quilon. Then he had ordained presbyters for the churches from four Brahmin families. At last he had crossed over to the Coramandel coast making conversions and became a martyr in Mylapore, Chennai.
- **Witness for Malabar Tradition:** Some details of this tradition may be found in a few songs such as the Ramban Thomma Pattu, the Veeradyan Pattu, and Margam Kali Pattu. It passed on orally to successive generations and is kept consistently by the Christians of Malabar.

The Western Tradition about St. Thomas in India



- **Western Tradition**: It is originated from an Apocryphal book called "Acts of Thomas" written in the middle of the 3rd century. **Acts of Thomas**: The Acts tells the story of the apostles dividing the regions of the world by lot and each going to his place to preach the gospel. Thomas was given India as his field of work. Fortunately **Abbanes** who was from North India was searching for an architect to build a palace for king Gundaphorus (Kabul, Indi-Parthian) found St. Thomas and brought him to India. After reaching India the King **Gundaphrous** treated Thomas kindly and gave him the money to construct a new court and palace but Thomas gave away the money to the poor. And when the king wanted to see the progress of the palace he called Thomas and found that Thomas spent all his money on poor. So the king put Thomas into the prison and while the king was devising a punishment for Thomas, **Gad** one of the king's brother becomes ill and eventually died but he comes to life and tells the king about the palace he saw in heaven for king Gundaphorus. Then both the king and his brother were converted to Christianity.
- **Martyred**: After that St. Thomas passes on to another Kingdom at the invitation of its king **Mazdai**. to heal the officer's wife and daughter who were possessed by the Evil Spirits. St. Thomas went and healed; which resulted in the conversion of noble women, including king's wife and many more. Thus Thomas continued his preaching making many converts in that kingdom. But by the hostility of the Brahmins, the king was furious by this and ordered his soldiers to kill Thomas.

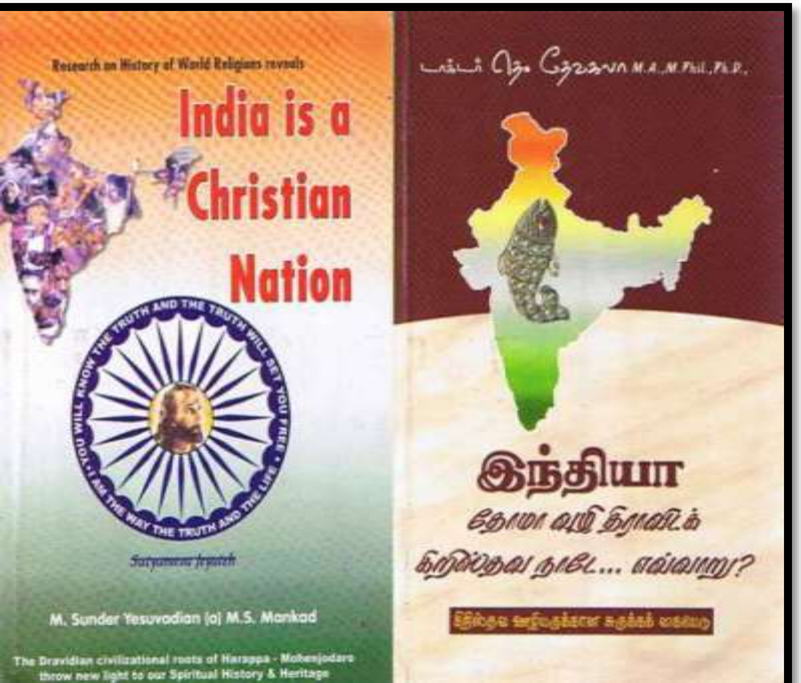
Mylapore Tradition by St. Thomas in Tamil Nadu

- **Mylapore Tradition**: It is based on Portuguese records. St. Thomas after preaching the gospel in Kerala, he went to Coramandel coast in Tamil Nadu. He set up his abode in a rock-cave on the Little Mount, Chennai, from where he used to move out for evangelization. His conversion brought him into conflict with local Hindu priests. Being infuriated by his success; his antagonists made attempts on his life.
- **Martyred**: On one such occasion when St. Thomas was chased by them, he took shelter in a cave near the Little Mount, and when he was about to be captured, he escaped from that place through a hole in the roof of the cave, and took shelter in the shrine he had built at the top of the St. Thomas Mount(Parangi Malai). His pursuers caught up with him there and spared him to death with a spear while he was clinging on to a stone cross inside the said shrine. Later his followers took his slain body and buried him on the sea shore in Santhom, Maylapore, Chennai.
- **Witness**: The first evidence comes from the Frankish monk, Theodore, who was the witness referred to by St. Gregory of Tours 594 AD. The discovery of old crosses; effigies of a king discovered at Kilirur are important pieces of evidence. The findings are cited in support of the tradition that he converted kings. The tradition further says that Christians from Malabar, west Asia, and even from China used to go on Pilgrimage to Mylapore and venerate the tomb.

Conclusion about St. Thomas in India

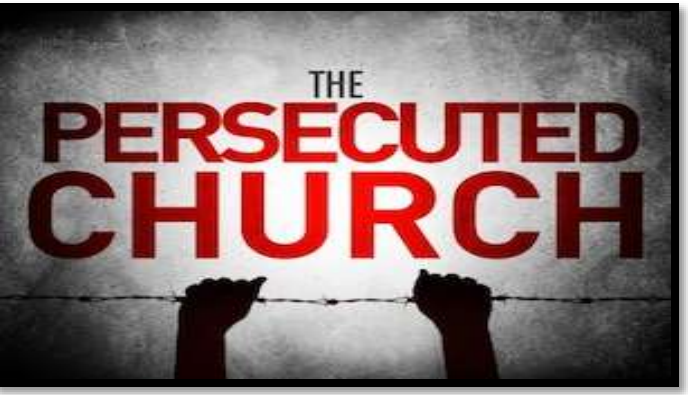
- **Problems in Establishing the Tradition:** We have no contemporary records to establish the matter beyond doubt from Indian. But from the third century onwards the ancient Christian writers begins to mention it, and even then they give no more than slight allusions, never a full account. The information that is available outside India through the Early Church Fathers is not sufficient to establish the tradition. The tomb at Mylapore is said to have been that of St. Thomas. But in 1523, the Portuguese opened the tomb and the direction in which the tomb is laid is not in the usual Christian way. So the question is raised whether it would be that of Thomas or somebody else. Some historians have rejected that tradition altogether and denied that St. Thomas ever came to India.
- **Conclusion:** The presence of Jews in Kerala suggests the possibility of a person like St. Thomas coming to Kerala to present the gospel of Christ to them. Based on the Acts of Thomas, some are willing to admit that St. Thomas may have visited North India but denied his visit to South India. Some view that St. Thomas visited both the North and the South in two separate journeys. But the local traditions is very strong and there is no other rival local tradition as to the origin of the Church in South India. There is no other country in the world which claims either to have the Tomb of St. Thomas. So, it is quite possible that Thomas had come to South India and preached the Gospel.

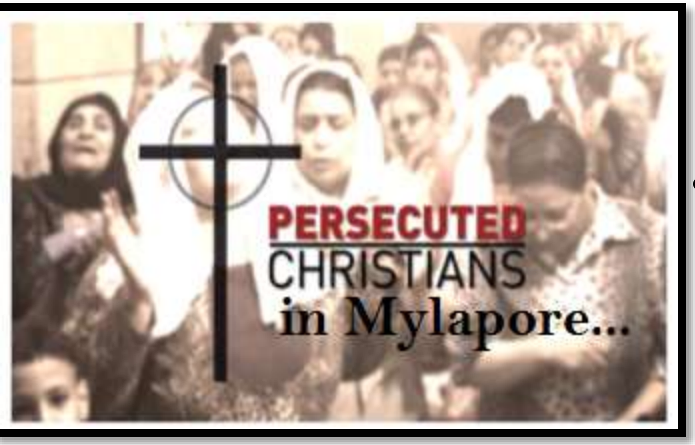
The Lost History of St. Thomas Christians in Tamil Nadu (72 -345AD)

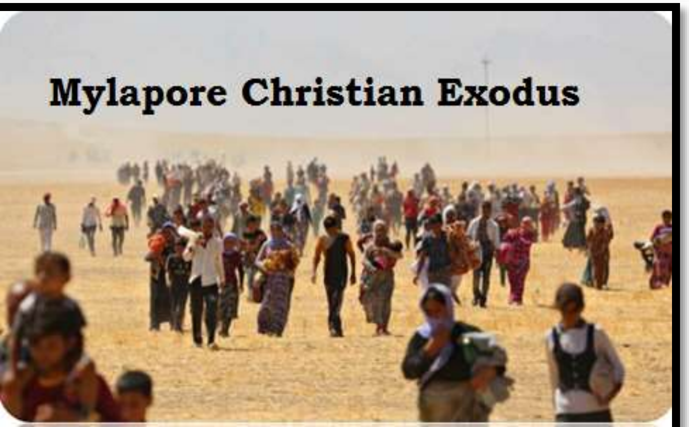


- **Lack of Evidence**: It is generally accepted by all that Christianity came to India at a very early stage in the history of Christianity. But it is impossible to present the history of St. Thomas Christians between (72-345 AD) mainly because of the lack of primary materials. We get glimpses of the Indian Church from the writings of the people of other lands, as recorded in their journals, reports. etc. occasionally we come across a few historical monuments, inscriptions and the traditions preserved in the Syrian community.
- **No Historians in India**: India has produced great philosophers and economists but has not given birth to a single historian during the ancient period. First two centuries immediately following the Apostolic Age are almost a complete blank. How many communities that may have been left behind by St. Thomas fared in that period we have no means of knowing.
- **Is it Speculation or True?**: One group of people claiming under the leadership of Dr. Deivanayagam based on Early Tamil Literatures like Tirukural, Saiva Sidhantha, Brahma Suthram etc. They are claiming that the Hindu sect of Saivism and Vaishnavism are the out come of St. Thomas Christianity in Tamil Nadu. But those who have the knowledge of Tamil Literature and Sanskrit ; can prove it weather it is true or not.

The Exodus of Mylapore Christians

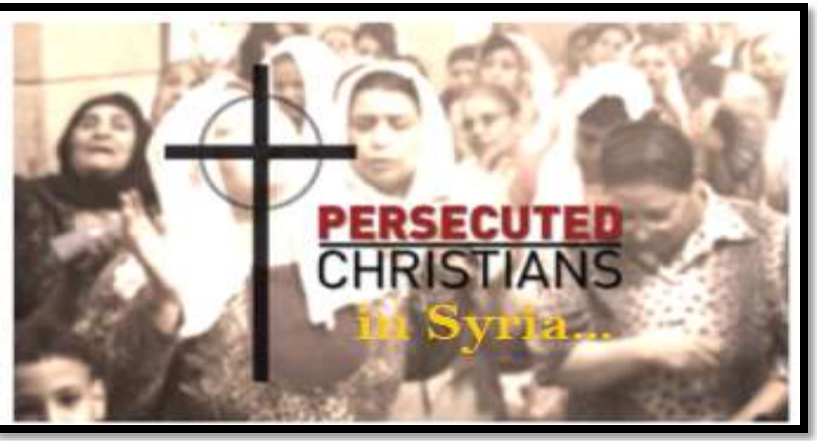


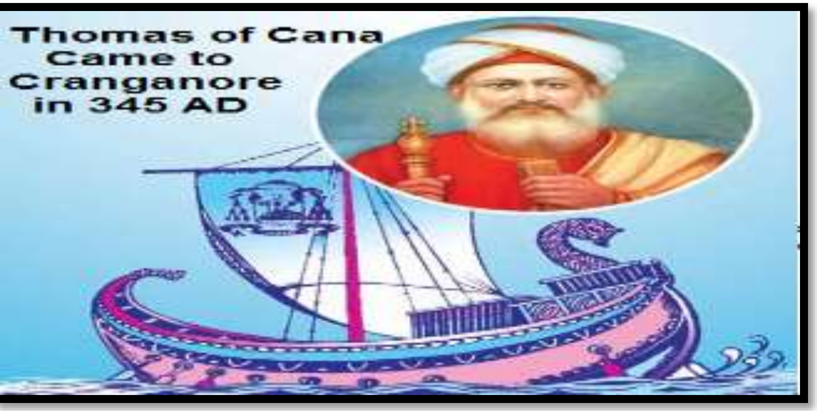




- **Christian Persecution in Mylapore:** The original community of St. Thomas Christians had undergone, in course of time, a decline from the death of St. Thomas. They were being targeted by the radical non-Christians that cause the exodus of Mylapore Christians. In the course of time the land was destroyed by war, persecution, suppression etc.
- **Mylapore Exodus:** Around 160 families remained faithful and they left Mylapore took refuge in Malabar, while the other communities which had settled down elsewhere, in the absence of any help, without priests, became de-Christianized in the course of centuries and were lost to the Christian faith.
- **Mylapore Christians in Malabar:** Mylapore Christians had settled down in Cranganore, Quilon and other parts of Kerala and they were kindly received by the Malabar Christians. The Original Kerala Christian community was swelled by immigrant groups of Christian from Mylapore.
- **Witness:** In the year 293 AD, the Vallals converts of Christianity in Kaveripoopattaam (Banks of Cauvery River) were persecuted by their King, so 72 families left their homes in a boat and came to Quilon. In 315 however Manikka Vachakr, a sorcerer, came to Quilon and reconverted to Hinduism about 116 persons who came from Coramandal coast. Almost all the Portuguese reports on the tradition agree Mylapore Exodus.

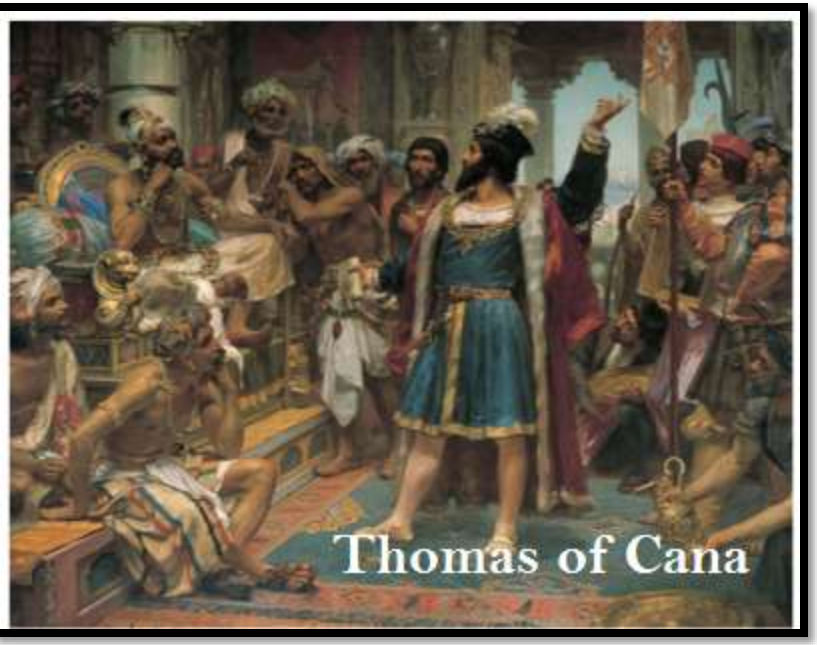
The first Immigration of Syrian Christianity in India(345 AD):





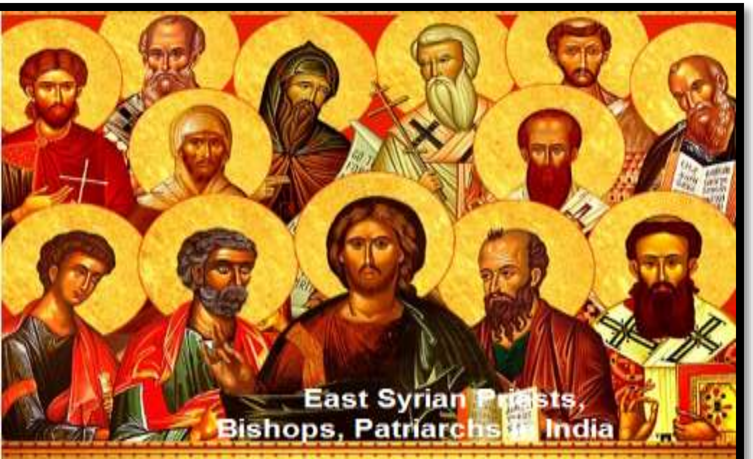
- **Malabar Christian:** After the death of Thomas the Apostle, the Malabar Church was left without a preacher and leader, and 93 years later also there were no priests at all. The tragic condition of the Indian Church ending in apostasy.
- **Christian Persecution in Persia:** When Rome became Christian in the 4th century, Christians of the Persian Empire were suspected of divided loyalty by its rulers. A violent persecution broke out under Sapor II (AD 310-379) in Persia and more than 16,000 Christian were martyred.
- **Thomas of Cana:** In 345 AD there was an exodus of Christians came to India in order to escape the Zoroastrian persecution in Persia. When Thomas of Cana, and his 400 followers came to Cranganore and settled. The St. Thomas Malabar Christians and the local Kingh Cheraman Perumal received them.
- **Syrian Christianity in India:** The arrival of Thomas of Cana was at a time, when the Malabar Church had no Ecclesiastical rulers. Thomas of Cana party included a Syrian Bishop, four priests and several deacons and laymen, women and children from Jerusalem, Bagdad and Nineveh. The Malabar Christians accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian Church. It led to the introduction Syrian Christianity in India.

Copper Plate Privileges for St. Thomas Christians



- **Influence of Thomas of Cana:** The Syrian wealthy merchant Thomas of Cana went to the king and offered him presents and formally asked the king to give him and to his descendants the said land. The king accessed to all their requests and granted to Thomas by a deed in copper plate Charter. Thomas of Cana secured high privileges for the Christian communities from the ruler.
- **Copper Plate Charter:** Any grant of privileges, perquisites or land made by rulers were usually recorded on Copper-Plates. The copper plates were a firm guarantee for safeguarding the grants and for the vindication of their rights whenever any inroads were made into them by anyone. These documents confirm that Christians acquired high place in the social and political hierarchy of Malabar, a position that they enjoyed along with the Jews.
- **The Privileges:** There is mention of the 72 privileges given to St. Thomas Christians. such as the exemption from the 1/6 duty on incoming articles and on articles on sales, remission of certain taxes and lordship over lower classes, church was exempted from the payment of slave-tax, the bishop or the chief priest of the church was accorded the same status as the military-political chiefs of the country.

The Link between Indian and Persian Churches

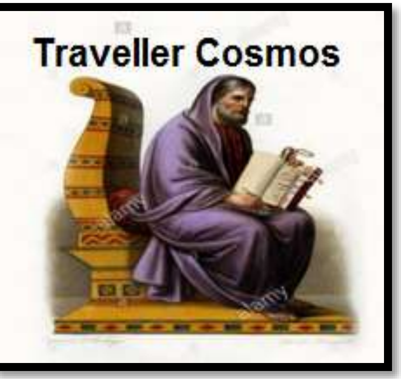


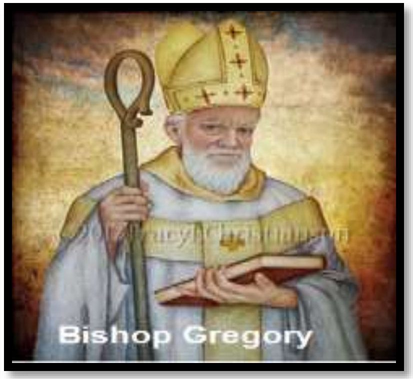
- **Malabar Church Condition**: The Christians of the time were a minority community. The church had not developed with an ecclesiastical organization or an ecclesiastical language for its own. Their only distinguishing feature was that they had crosses on their doors and walls and were in the habit of giving their children Christian names. Basically they were left as sheep without their own shepherd.
- **Syrian Christian in India**: The arrival of Thomas of Cana in 345, the East Syrian Church came into direct contact with the Christian of India. The new arrivals reinvigorated the church and secure for it recognition and high caste status from the local Indian King in Malabar. In the course of time, St. Thomas Christians became so dependent on the Syrian Christians later that everything ecclesiastical in India was practically East-Syrian.
- **Mixing of St. Thomas Christians and Syrian Christians**: The St. Thomas Christian had in the course of time come into contact with the Persian Church. The Malabar Christians were delighted to have Syrian Christians as patrons and benefactors and placed themselves under their patronage. They entered into matrimonial alliance and merged into a single community. It was the beginning of Syrian influence on the liturgical life and practice of the Indian Church.

Development of Christianity in India: Fifth Century

- Adaptation: The Metropolitans and other hierarchs came from Persia time to time and governed the Indian church. Later the Indian Church adopted the East-Syrian liturgy of the Persian Church. We have many witness from Eastern Church.
- St. John Chrysostom(403AD) of Antioch: He wrote: "How could the Apostles who spoke only Hebrew draw all these people to the faith?" How were they able to preach to the Scythians, Indian and Sarmatians? It was because of the Holy Spirit had given them the gift of tongues… The place of burial of St. Thomas is definitely known. Where could it be except in SOUTH INDIA".
- Mana, the Bishop of Riwardashir, Persia: In 470 AD, he wrote a number of treatises and hymns. They were translated from Greek to Syriac and all the books were sent to India. A syriac commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, produced at Edessa. That Episitle has been translated from Greek into Syriac, by Mar Komai, with the help of Daniel, the Indian priest.
- Training for Indian Priests: From the 5th century onwards, the Indian church was able to send priests to be educated in the best schools of the East Syrian Church, and to assist the doctors of the church in the revision of the ancient Syriac translations of the Pauline Epistles.

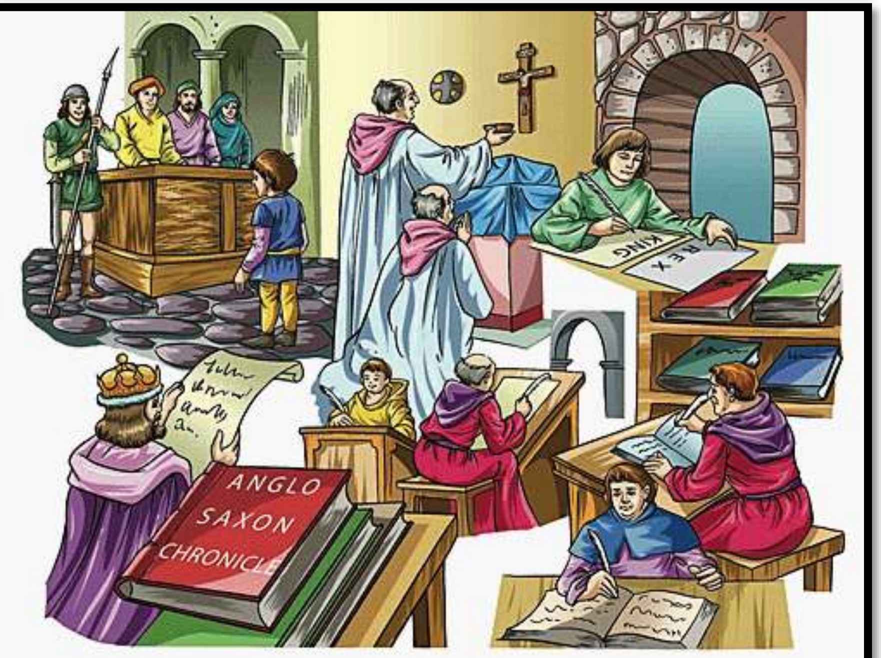
Witnessing Christianity in India from 6-8 Centuries:





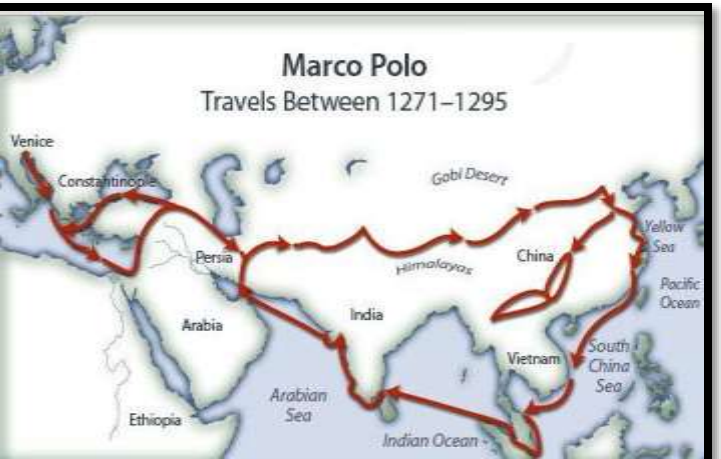
- **Cosmos:** He was a Christian merchant of Alexandria visited India around AD 522. He wrote a book on the basis of his travels, called "Universal Christian Topography" on the Christian churches in the countries he visited, and about the Indian Malabar Church. He visited Malabar and saw a Christian community with a bishop of Persia ruling over them.
- **Bishop Gregory of Tours (France):** In 590, he wrote in his "In Gloria Martyrium that " Thomas the apostle, according to the history of his passion, he is declared to have suffered in India. In that Indian place where he first rested, there is a monastery and a Church of wonderful size, carefully adorned and arrayed. After a long time his blessed body was taken to the city which they called Edessa in Syria and there buried".
- **Isidore of Seville (AD 636):** He is the first to mention by name "Calamina" as the exact place of the tomb in India(Calamina the city in India).
- **Second Syrian Immigration in India:** The second immigration arrived at Cranganore towards the end of the 8th century when the King of Quilon Veera Raghva Chkravarth granted certain privileges on copper plates to the Syrian community to rebuild the town of Quilon and erecting Churches in Cranganore.

Witnessing Christianity in India in Ninth Century



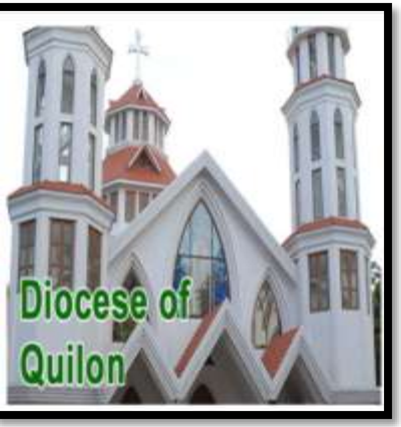
- **The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (876):** Alfred the great of England sent alms to India to rebuild the tomb of Apostle St. Thomas. The same year led Sighelm, Bishop of Shireburn with his company visited the tomb of St. Thomas and returned to England with spices and other cargo from India.
- **Syrian Church Fathers:** In 823, the Syrian fathers Mar Sapore and Mar Parut came to India. They went to the king Shakirbirti and asked for a piece of land to erect a town for themselves and build a church and the king granted them their request. They settled in Quilon and the evidence for this are five copper plates recording various grants to the Christians which is found in Jacobite Seminary at Kottayam and Mar Thoma Church at Tiruvalla.
- **Copper Plate Charter:** In one of the charter the grant is made to the Tarisa church at Quilon. The charter grated certain privileges and rights to the Christian community. In the light of these royal grants there emerges a good position of their community and obtained status above the lower classes, and which made them equal to the Nayars, the middle class in the country.

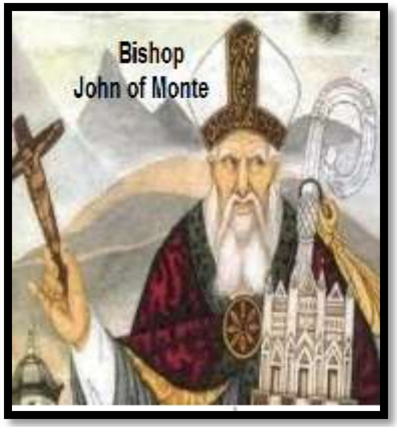
Latin Christianity in India in the 12-15 Centuries



- **Open Door for China:** The Mongolian conquerors opened up the vast country of China to European merchants. So the Latin Missionaries were bound to travel to China. **Marco Polo(1292):** He was the first European traveler to India. He wrote that a tomb reputed of St. Thomas, which was a place of pilgrimage for both the Christians and Mohammedans.
- **John of Monte Corvine (1305):** He was a Franciscan missionary. He was the founder and the first Bishop of the Catholic mission in China. During his stay at Quilon he met St. Thomas Christians and was requested to baptize their Children. He baptized Khaishan Külüg, the third great khan (1307–11) and his mother, He converted more than six thousand people including a Nestorian king named George. He stayed in India for thirteen months.
- **Jordan Chatelain (1320):** He was a French Dominican missionary. He and four Franciscans missionaries were on their way to China and wished to travel via Quilon but they were landed at Thane, Bombay. They saw there were a few Christians communities, who were lacking pastoral care and consequently were lost in ignorance. He baptized 130 people and looking for more. During stay at Thane for evangelization, they have undergone several sufferings and all his companions were martyred by Muslim governor. Later, he realized that it was difficult to preach in North India where the Muslims dominated. So, he moved to Quilon.

The Fall of Latin Christianity in India: 14th Centuries.





- **Friar Odoric of Pordenone (1324):** He was a Franciscan missionary, who sailed from China to India, landing at Thane, Bombay visited the Nestorian Christian community. While on the way to Ceylon he visited Malabar coast and to the shrine of St. Thomas at Mylapore. Later he sailed to China to spread the gospel.
- **John De Marignolli (1348):** He was a Franciscan missionary on his return journey from China arrived at Quilon and found Latin Church. He spent 16 months in India. Later he visited to Myalpore to examined the Church that the apostle Thomas had built. In the year 1350 he left India. He is the last traveler to report on the existence of Latin Church in India.
- **Quilon Diocese of Roman Catholicism:** On August 1329, the first Catholic diocese of Quilon was erected with 15,000 Latin Catholics. As far as Malabar was concerned, there were now two Christian communities living side by side, the Latin Catholics, converts from Hinduism, and the local Christians, supposed to be 'Nestorians'.
- **Decline of Latin Christianity in India:** The Medieval Latin Mission in India languished, the Latin Christian community of Quilon disappeared, and the missionaries who created spiritual needs of these Christians were no more to be seen. The results of Latin mission were lost in the downfall of the Mongol Empire during the 14th century to the Islamic rulers.

Persian Church Juridical in India before the arrival of Portuguese

- **Indian Church:** The Church in India was connected to the Church in East Syria, or Mesopotamia and Persia. Indian was not autonomous church; and there were about 30,000 church families living in prosperity and security. All the Christians who live here are Nestorians. It received its Bishops from Mesopotamia. Ecclesiastically they had to depend on the East Syrian Patriarch and bishops from overseas. The Syrian Fathers governed the dioceses of India and Malabar.

- **Crisis in Indian Church:** At the end of the 15th century there was shortage of bishops in the country. The St. Thomas Christian had been without bishops for 40 years owing to some differences among them. Once these differences were overcome, delegates were sent to Persia to get bishops. Soon the Eastern church send two bishops Mar Thoma and Mar John to India in 1490 with the two priests who had gone to the Patriarch, and who were ordained by the Patriarch.

- **Syrian Episcopal:** The church of St. Thomas Christians came under the jurisdiction of a Pontiff, called catholicos, twelve cardinals, two patriarchs, archbishops and bishops. The Pontiff or catholicos resided in Armenia, so too, it seems, the cardinals. One patriarch was in India and the other in China. Episcopal supervision was provided by bishops from Persia, while local administration of the church was carried out by local priests. the Persian Church acquired jurisdiction over the Indian Church. The St. Thomas Christian had an archdeacon to serve their Church and community. The Craganore Church was considered the Cathedral in India.

- **Role of Bishop:** The offices of the bishops, it appears that the consecration of alters and ordination of priests were reserved to them. The churches could not be erected nor mass said in them unless the bishop had laid the first stone and until he had blessed them. The bishops ordained local candidates to priesthood, but did not give them permission to say mass.

- **Worship:** The Indian church from very early times depended on the East-Syrian Church not only for its Bishops but also for its manner of worship. The Indian Church adapted the practices of the East-Syrian Persian Church for their worship and liturgy. Its ecclesiastical language was Syriac.

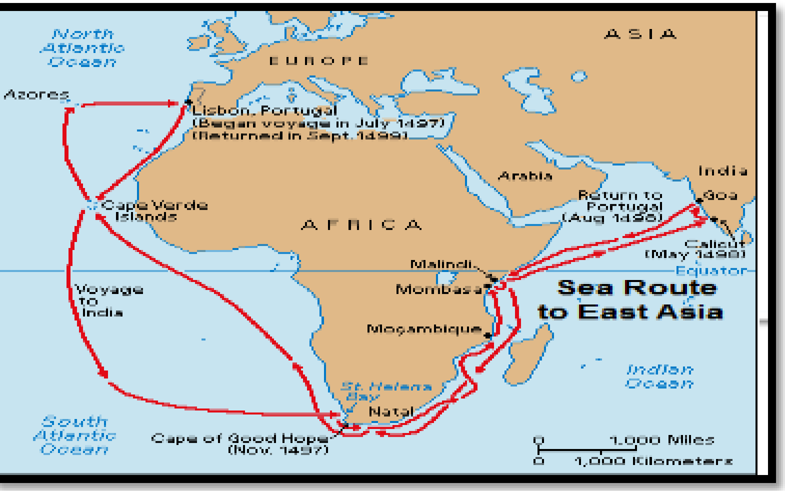
The Life of St. Thomas Christians before Portuguese

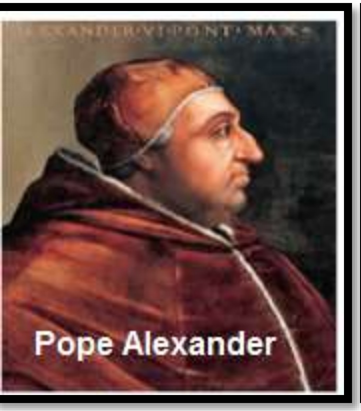
- **Social Life:** The St. Thomas Christians were so much attached to their ancient customs and usages. St. Thomas Christians held high social position and they come next after the Brahmins. Like Nairs and noblemen they may ride on elephants. They were well placed in the social hierarchy.
- **Economic Life:** Syrian Christians were merchants and seem to have occupied a highly honorable position in the state, and to have continued to enjoy the patronage of rulers for a long time. The Rajas and the Emperors conferred up on them royal privileges and grants to be enjoyed forever.
- **Political Life:** The life of St. Thomas Christians had been leading between worlds. One is the Geographical, political and social world of Malabar and the other is Ecclesiastical world of East-Syrian Persian Church. St. Thomas Christians were respected by the local rulers, leaders, and higher castes.
- **Cultural Life:** St. Thomas Christians enjoyed Socio-Political status on par with the high caste non-Christians. They adapted themselves well to the culture of the place. St. Thomas Christians as: "Hindu in culture, Christian in Religion and Oriental in worship" their life was strikingly similar to that of their Hindu brethren.

The Life of St. Thomas Christians before Portuguese

- **Religious Life:** It was the East-Syrian form of worship that the Christians followed both in liturgy and other functions of the church. Their ecclesiastical language was always Syriac. They were very pious, showing great veneration for the cross and faithful observance of the various fasts and of the sermons which were preached to them by their priests for many hours together. **Ecclesiastical Life:** Though there was Nestorian Episcopacy. The orthodox faith was retained. They were governed by Armenian bishops who resided there and were therefore subject to the patriarch of Armenia.
- **Church Customs:** The Church adapted herself to the local circumstances. Some churches were built in the fashion of the Hindu temples with only cross in the alter. There were no bells. The Christians washed their feet before entering the church. On entering they made a profound veneration of their heads touching the floor.
- **Caste System:** St. Thomas Christians were ranked among high-caste people, being a minority they could not in any way influence the structure of Hindu society.
- **Mission and Evangelism:** St. Thomas Christians did not felt any missionary responsibility. They never attempted to bring their non-Christian neighbours to a knowledge of Christ, and so into the Christian Church. and thereby preventing conversions from other castes.

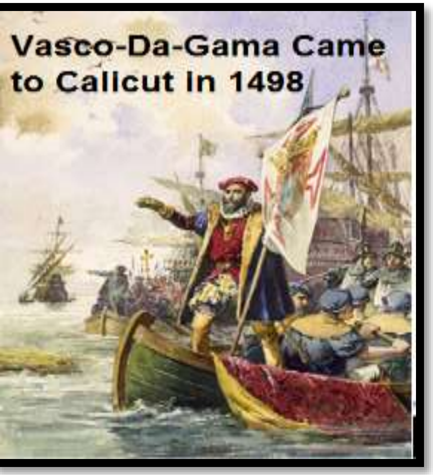
Beginning of Western Colonialism in India





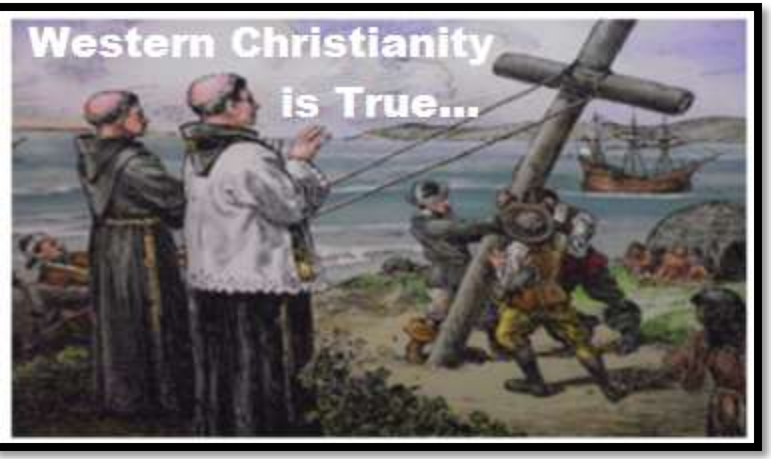
- **Impact of Islam in World Trades**: With the rise of Islam and its effective control of the eastern Mediterranean, the commerce of the world passed into Arab hands. The western Christian world wanted to find out a new route to East for the purpose of trades against the heavy tolls to the Muslim Turks. The other motive was to hem in the Turks and to break his hold upon the Holy Land.
- **Colonialism**: The newly risen maritime kingdoms of **Spain** and **Portugal** were the pioneers in the exploration of the Seven seas which led to the founding of colonial empires in America, Africa and Asia.
- **The Treaty of Tordesilas in 1494**: The missionary patronage of Portugal and Spain inevitably led to confrontation with the civil powers in the 14th Century. The **Pope Alexander VI** intervened in the struggle for dominance between the Spanish and Portuguese, dividing the world between them in 1494, giving the Portuguese the East as their portion in colonial, commercial, political and religious expansion. Likewise the Pope gave the West to Spain. The pope also granted them the power to conquer the kingdoms of Mohammedans and pagans to build churches, monasteries and other religious foundations and to send missionaries and to possess temporal goods; and it insisted on the spread of the kingdom of God among the conquered.

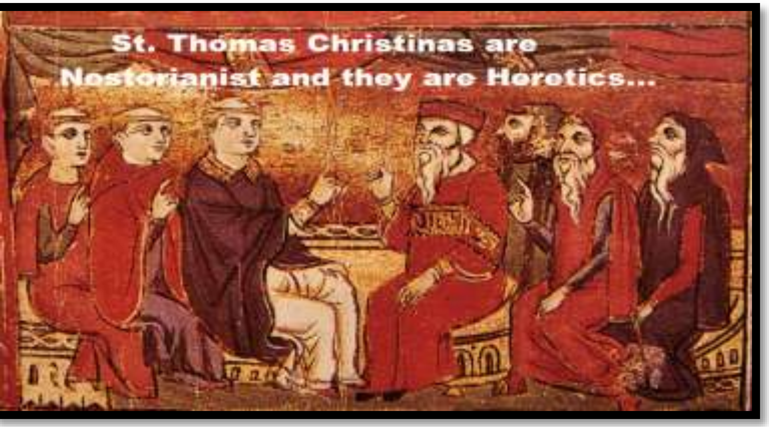
Arrival of Vasco-Da-Gama in India:



- **<u>Quist of Portugal King</u>:** The Portugal King John II wanted to discover a sea route to India which resulted a new sea passage to East. The efforts of the Portuguese bore fruit in going round the Cape of Hope(South Africa) and in the discovery of India which had been the main attraction for the West for many centuries.
- **<u>Vasco-Da-Gama</u>:** He found the sea route to India and successfully reached Calicut on 21st May 1498. He came to India in search of "Christians and Spices". The king of Cochin was eager to establish contract with the Portuguese. From this time European nations were attracted towards India, and several of them attempted to establish themselves in this land of pepper and spices, of silk and peacocks.
- **<u>Western Christianity in India</u>:** The arrival of Vasco-Da-Gama is taken as a landmark not only in the history of the Church, but also in the cultural contacts of India with the West. The discovery of India was marked the beginning of a new stage of existence for the Christians of India. The St. Thomas Christians welcomed western Christians as their brethren in faith.

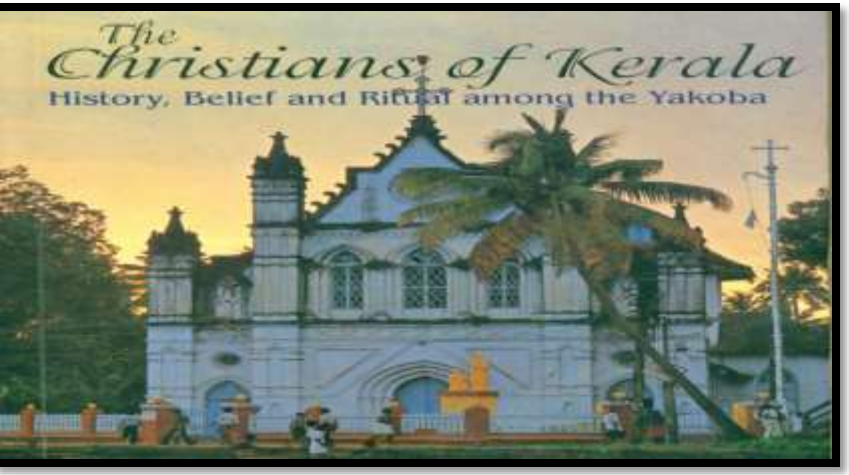
Portuguese Attitude towards St. Thomas Christianity





- **St. Thomas Christianity is Heresy**: The Portuguese understood that every ecclesiastical practice of St. Thomas Christians, every element of Rite which differed from the Latin and western ways was considered as abuse, and error, the result of heresy and superstition.
- **West on Eastern Christianity**: The Portuguese viewed the East-Syrian Persian Church which had separated from the Church of Rome and professed a faith different from the Orthodox one of the West, the Nestorian faith, so they were Heretics and Schismatic's. The Portugal King Manuel I wanted to reform the Indian Christians along western, Roman line.
- **Sheep Stealing**: The Portuguese was attempting to absorb Indian Christians into the Latin Church instead of recognizing their original status as the Church of All India. The Portuguese made a concerted attempt to win over the St. Thomas Christian community as a whole to the Latin jurisdiction and make them accept Latin and western customs and practices.
- **Disappointment of St. Thomas Christians**: The Portuguese influence in Cranganore and their Latinizing attempts would eventually force St. Thomas Christians to leave the place, one of the most ancient of their habitats, a place which evoked memories of their historical past. They began to reject Portuguese.

St. Thomas Christians Attitude towards Portuguese:

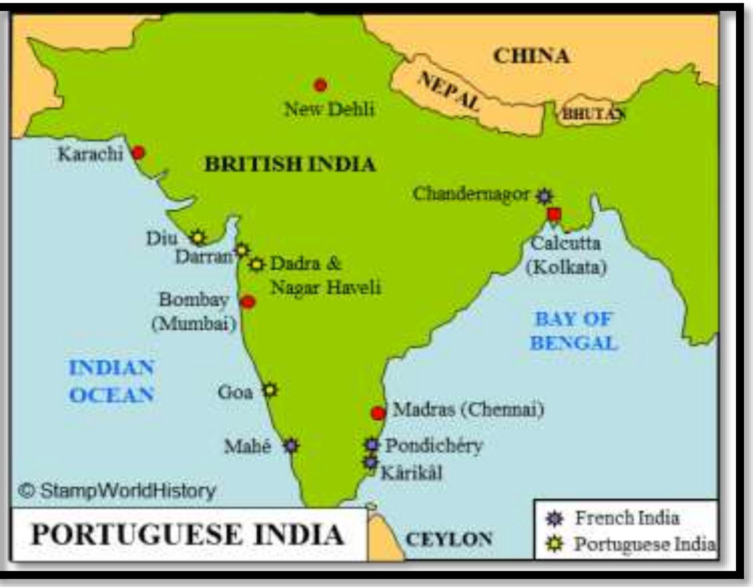


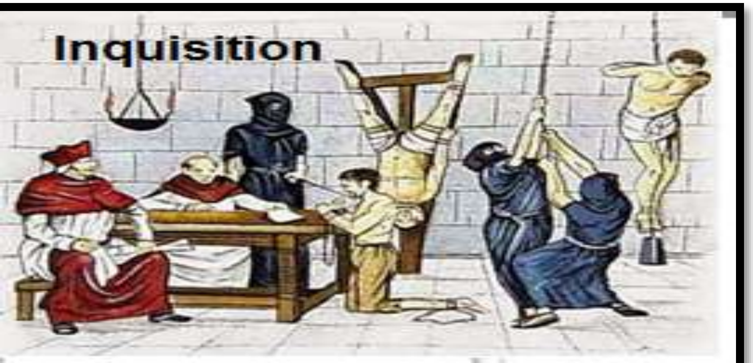
- **Brotherhood:** The first encounter between the Christians of the West and India had remarkable impacts on Indian Christianity. St. Thomas Christians approach to the Portuguese in the spirit of Christian solidarity with the fellow Christians from the West.
- **Restlessness of St. Thomas Christians:** The wars between the king of Calicut and the king of Cochin were source of constant trouble for the St. Thomas Christians living in Cranganore. So they seek their help in vindication their rights and privileges.
- **Prestige's of St. Thomas Christians:** By the arrival of the powerful Portuguese Christians the community of the Indian Christians, the St. Thomas Christians, stood to gain greatly. Their prestige rose in the eyes of their non-Christian competitors. Their rights and privileges were hence-forth more scrupulously respected by the local rulers.
- **St. Thomas Christians towards Syrian Fathers:** St. Thomas Christians were keen to maintain their allegiance to the East-Syrian Persian Church and were unwilling to replace it with any other. They never accepted the idea that only the Latin form of Christianity was the true form. The Christians held that the faith of St. Peter Christianity was different from that of St. Thomas Christianity.

Social Life of Portuguese Christians

- **Life Style:** A large number of the Portuguese settled down in the ports of Goa, Calicut, Cochin and Cranganore. Their way of life became a scandal to many respectful Indians. They were often cruel, rapacious and many of them gave rein to their lusts. **Religious Life:** Their faith is strong, sometime even verging on fanaticism, whose Christianity is militant in character. They asked the converts to adopt Portuguese names as well as Portuguese surnames and even the western way of dressing.
- **Problem for Portuguese Men:** There were 1800 soldiers and more than 3000 Portuguese men who settled in Kerala. So, illegitimate relations were inevitable as the Portuguese came to India unaccompanied by their women. Prostitution became legalized and several mothers made profitable business by selling their virgin daughters into prostitution. Intermarriages were greatly encouraged by the Portuguese authorities. Many of the first conversions came from among those women who lived in marriage or concubineage with Portuguese men. This gave rise to a distinct group of Portuguese-Indian Christians who in course of time came to be called by various names such as Paranghi, Munnutikar, Mesticos, Topazes etc.
- **Parangi Markkam:** The Hindus called the Portuguese as Parangi, because Christians did not observe the caste system, ate beef and pork, wine-drinking, loose-moral living, which only the untouchables did. So Hindus included the missionaries and their converts among the untouchables and outcastes. Therefore they called Christianity as Parangi Markkam(Nickname).

Portuguese Jurisdiction in India



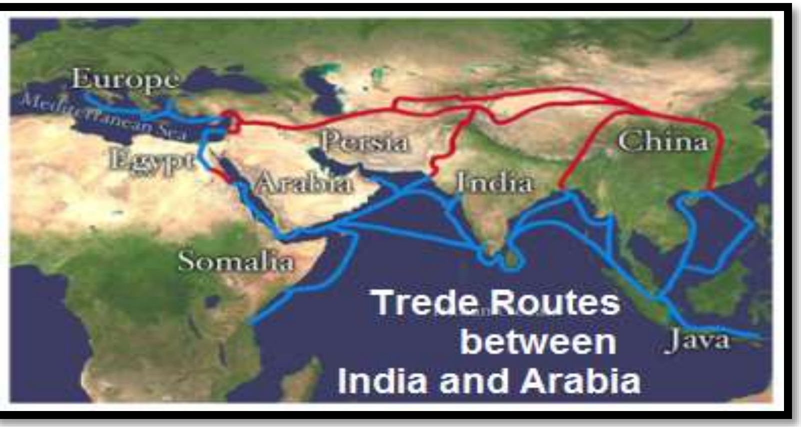


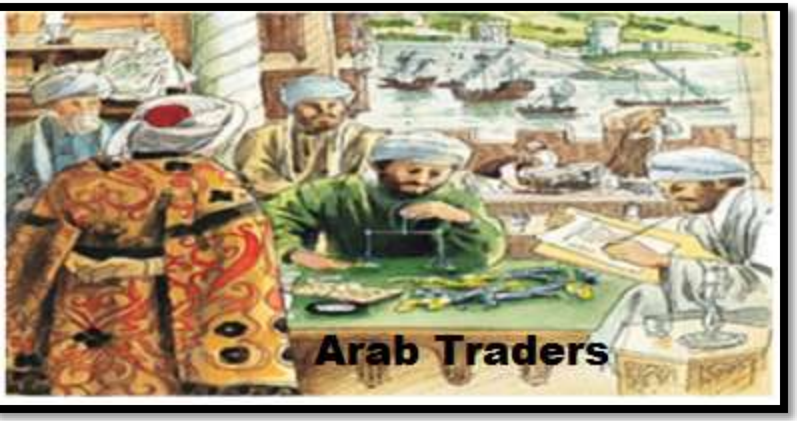
- **Portuguese Reign in India:** The Crown and the Cross remained inseparable part in the history of Portuguese colonialism. The civil administration of Portuguese establishments in India till 1505 and from this time onwards, a governor was appointed in 1514 for the civil administration and he represented the Portuguese king. In 1524 Vasco-Da-Gama came to India for the third time as the second viceroy of India.
- **Padroado:** Pope Leo X in 1514 established the Padraodo and it is the right of Patronage -the sum total of the favours and privileges conceded by Rome to the kings of Portugal in Christian mission. The work of the conversion of souls and of establishing the church, erecting bishoprics and ecclesiastical benefices, is the duty and exclusive right of the Church herself. It is generally used to reduce the St. Thomas Christians to their obedience.
- **Inquisition:** The Portuguese established the Inquisition in India since 1546 onwards to stop and punish heresy against Christianity in South India. The Catholic Christian missionaries also burnt any books written in Sanskrit, Marathi, or Konkani that they could find in their colonial area. They persecuted Hindus, Muslims, Jews and New Christians in India. Numerous natives were imprisoned for many years, publicly flogged, or executed, often by burning at the stake.

The Portuguese Quest for St. Thomas Tomb

- **Mylapore:** Portuguese used Pulicat as a port of call, before Mylapore was discovered. It was 25 days journey from Malabar Coast. The first recorded visit of the Portuguese to Mylapore was in 1517. Some Portuguese came across an old chapel carved with crosses and was told by a Mohammedan that it was built over the place where St. Thomas was buried.
- **Tomb of St. Thomas:** Tomb in Mylapore is the burial place of a Muslim man, who is the custodian of St. Thomas tomb over 60 years of age. He had become a Muslim two years prior to this, but he was descended from the Christians of St. Thomas. He had recovered his lost eyesight just a few days earlier by praying to the Apostle. His duty was to light the house of the Apostle. He begged alms for the house.
- **Renovation of St. Thomas Tomb:** The Portugal King Manuel II wanted to rebuild St. Thomas tomb and began to take a direst and keen interest in the tomb.. In March 1547 while digging the foundations for a new church, other ruined foundations were unearthed and a stone-cross which became famous as the "miraculous cross" of Mylapore was accidentally discovered. It was after the discovery of this cross that opinion began to form about the death of the Apostle at Mylapore.

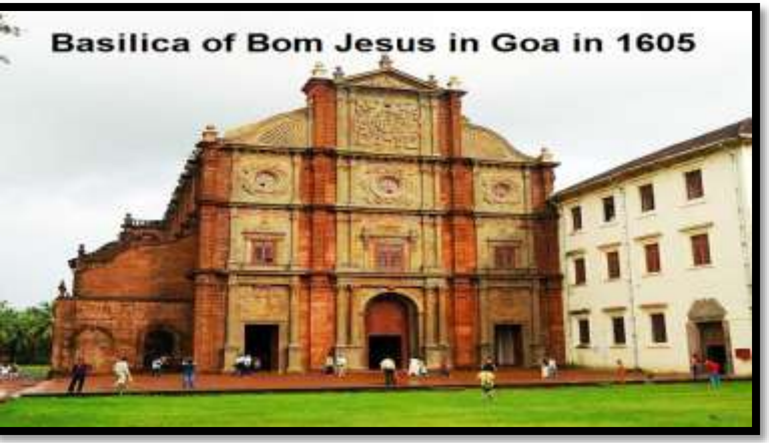
The Raise and Fall of Arabs Treads in India

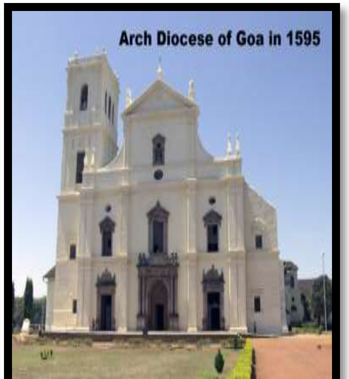




- **The Arabs Vs Christianity**: The Arab Turkish who captured Baghdad in 1534 did not make life easy for the Christians. The rise of Islam, the repeated attempts of the crusades, and the attempts at reunion with Easter Christendom resulted in bringing the East and West into closer contact with each other in India.
- **Arab Traders**: Muslim conquests in the Indian subcontinent mainly took place from the 12th to the 16th centuries. The flowing trade of the Muslim Arabs in India enabled them to establish their colonies from Pulicot, Nagapattanam, Kilakkarai, Kayalpattanani in South India and captured the monopoly of trade in the ports of these regions.
- **Hesitation**: The Portuguese were not received with joy in Calicut because its ruler was presumably under the influence of the Muslim merchants and feared the loss of his profits. The obvious reason is that the Muslims controlled the main-trade-routes between the countries of West Asia and the East.
- **The Fall of Arabs Trades:** The Portuguese completely stopped the maritime of Arab traders. They eliminated the most powerful Muslim and Arab merchant groups from India. The power of the Portuguese drove off the Arabs, so that if the Indians wish to trade, they needed the permission of the Portuguese. The Arabs monopoly came to an end.

Establishing Portuguese Mission in Goa : 16th Century



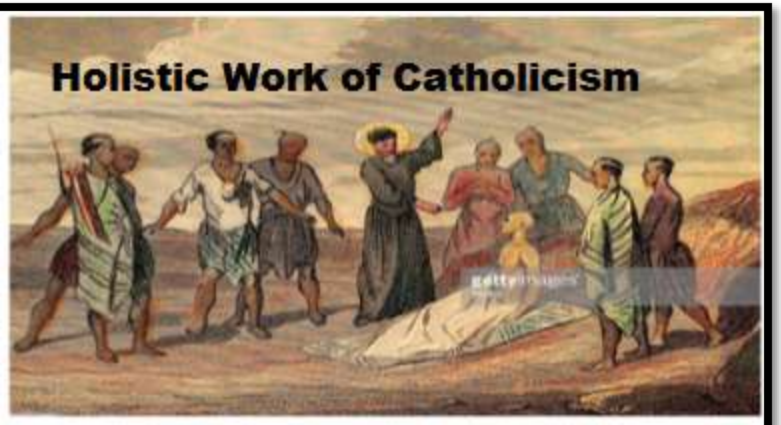


- **Portuguese in Goa:** The Portuguese conquered Goa in 1510 and made their administrative capital of India. Their primary aim was not to establish a colonial empire but to gain control over profitable trade. Goa has been called the Rome of the East.
- **Problems for Portuguese Men:** At that time, a Portuguese census showed that there were 1,800 residents and 3,600 soldiers in Goa. The feminine element was essential for the Portuguese living in India. So many female slaves were sold to Portuguese men. They wrote a letter to Portugal king that the need to permit Portuguese women to sail to India to initiate a white colonization.
- **Conversion:** There is no Christian community before the arrival of Portuguese in Goa. In 1517 a group of Franciscan missionaries came to Goa. They used two principle for the Christianization of Goa were: Inter-racial marriages and the application of moral force. The first generation of Goan Christians came from the marriages of Portuguese with the women captured from the vanquished Muslim citizen of Goa and also with Hindu women.
- **Goa Diocese:** The power of Portugal had grown and number of Christians had increased. There were small and large group of new converts spread throughout the islands of Goa and many villages had churches or chapels already. The first Catholic diocese was erected in Goa in 1539.

Attitude of Portuguese Mission to St. Thomas Christians

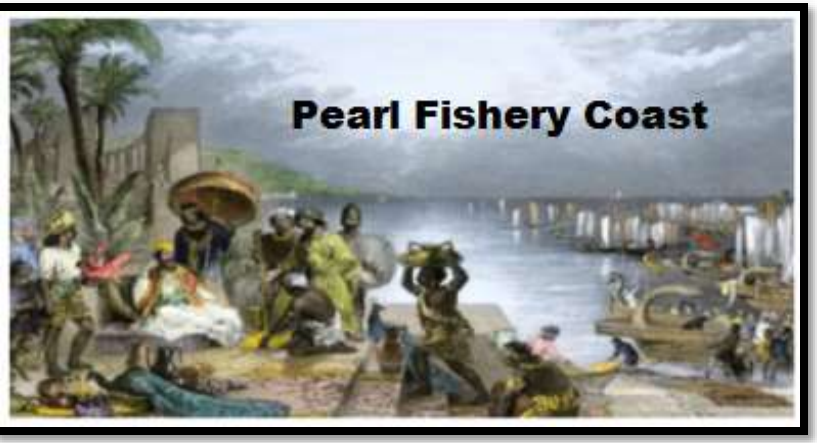
- **Mission Fields:** In the beginning, missionary activity in India developed in localities where the Portuguese built their factories and forts. They preached the gospel to the fisher folk in the coastal regions, in the first instance and later penetrated into the interior.
- **Against Inculturation:** The Catholic missionaries were against any sort of indianization or integration of Christianity with Indian culture. They did not practice religious tolerance. Many of their moves were meant to destroy the customs of the indigenized Christians and to Europeanize them.
- **Christian Imperialism:** Christianity spread mainly among the depressed classes. Consequently the caste Hindus developed the notion that Christianity was the religion of the depressed classes. They interpreted Christianity as means for the extension of western political control and aggressive imperialism.
- **Mission Methodology:** They encouraged inter-caste and inter-race marriages. They rewarded in every possible vary the embracing of Christianity by the natives. Women converts multiplies quickly, primarily for financial gain. Many of the first conversions came from among those women who lived in marriage or concubineage with Portuguese men. They baptized their frequently illegitimate offspring without enquiry.

Portuguese Mission among St. Thomas Christians in 16th Century



- **Catholic Missionary Order**: The Roman Catholic Church established its roots in Malabar with the advent of' the Portuguese in the 16"' century. The most active and successful Catholic missionaries of religious orders: Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites, Capuchins and Threatens.
- **Mission**: The Portuguese missionaries began active work among the St. Thomas Christians; their continuing preoccupation was how to bring those Christians directly under Latin Padroado subjection and the Latinize their life and customs.
- **Cranganore Seminary**: The Roman Catholic missionaries established a Latin Seminary at Cranganore in 1514 to introduce Latin worship and customs among the St. Thomas Christians. Many St. Thomas Christians were admitted in the seminary also many sent to Portugal for studies or other missions.
- **Holistic Work**: The Catholic missionaries' works of charity and humanitarian services is well appreciated among the people. Their appeal of charity did not end with Baptism, but continued care of the poor, the sick, the disables, honorable burial to the poor dead, and helped those condemned to death was an integral part of the follow-up pastoral care.

Conversion of Paravar Community in Tamil Nadu in 16th Century

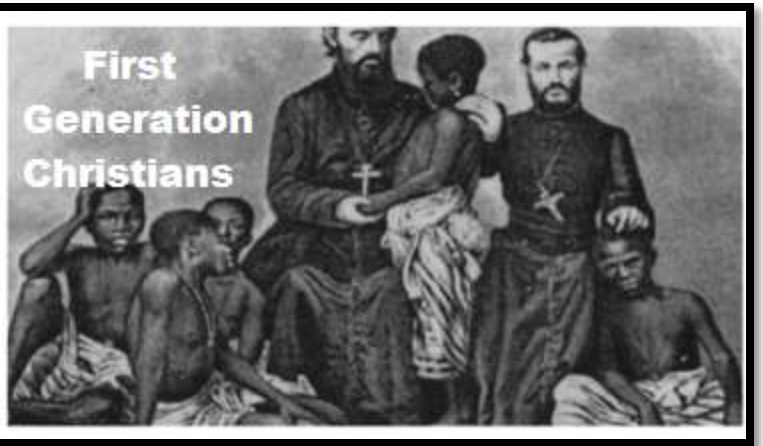


- **The Pearl Fishery Coast:** The Paravars were a Tamil fisher caste who inhabited the fishery coast extending from Cape Comorin(Kanyakumari) to Rameswaram. The Paravars had held almost a monopoly of the rights to exploit the pearl fisheries, having negotiated with successive kings to achieve this which was naturally attracted rival regimes.
- **Crisis of Paravars:** The Muslim Arabs who had established a monopoly over the Sea-borne trade and controlled the Pearl-fishery Coast. The Paravars had been reduced from independent fishermen to the status of slaves and day-laborers under the Muslim lease-holders. The Arabs constantly harassed the poor paravar fishers. There were squabbles and deadly fights between the Paravars and the Moslems in 1532. No Paravas was allowed to escape alive.
- **Mass Conversion:** The Paravas were asked to appeal for Portuguese protection. As a compensation, the Paravars accepted to convert to Christianity. In 1535, the Portuguese expelled the Arabs. As a result, more than 20,000 of them embraced Christianity. The Portuguese derived considerable profit from the pearl trade, and strictly controlled the Pearl Fishery Coast through the Padrodo system. By the end of 1537 the entire Parava community.

Catholic Mission among Paravas by Francis Xavier

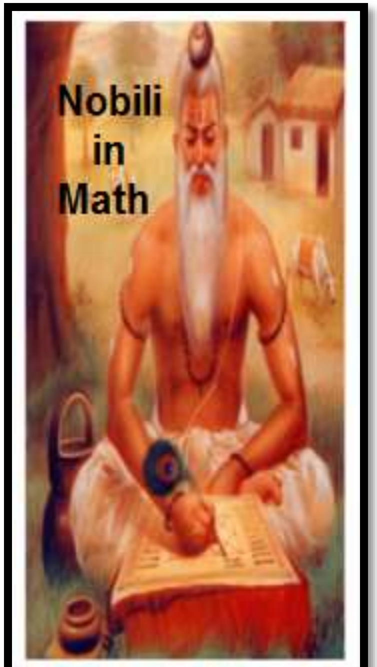
- **Francis Xavier in India:** He was the first Jesuit missionary. He landed in Goa in 1542 and sent to the Tamil Nadu.
- **Francis in Tamil Nadu:** In 1542, the Paravars ceased to be Hindus but bore Portuguese Christian names. No church has been built; no kind of pastoral ministry was available to them. The children born between 1537-42 had not even been baptized. Francis Xavier devoted himself to the people of Paravars from Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) to Rameshwaram. He had successfully converted over 40,000 Paravars into Christianity.
- **Francis in Kerala:** In 1548, he was sent to work among the newly converted people of Malabar fishery Coast. He baptized about 10,000 Mukkuvar fisher folk and thereby laid the foundation of Latin Christianity in Travencore. The following year the king of Tanur became a Christian. He worked in Malabar area with the sole purpose of bringing back the Christians from Nestorianism. He established a Seminary in Quilon.
- **Francis Xavier in Goa:** Xavier visited the Fishery coast of Goa. He found the Seminary of St. Paul and built many churches in Goa. Xavier bid farewell to his fellow Jesuits in Goa to launch out to China in 1552 but died while he was waiting for a boat that would take him to mainland China. Now his body is preserved in Goa. He was a Pioneer of Catholic Missions known as Second Apostle of India.

Portuguese Mission among Depressed Classes in Kerala



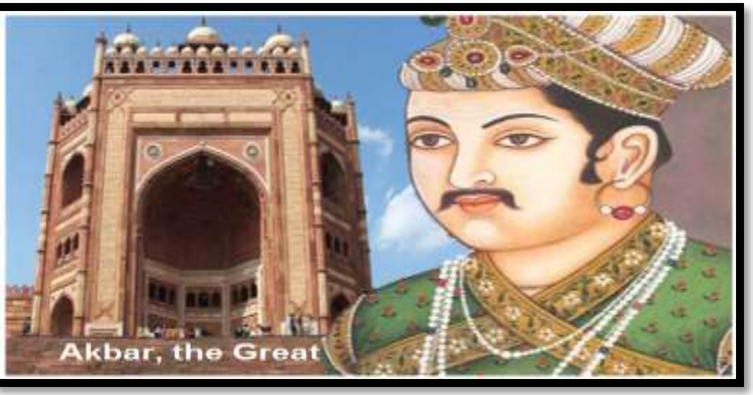
- **Mission to Out Castes:** The Portuguese missionaries were attempting to absorb Indian into the Latin Church. Because of the strong caste system, most converts were from lower castes. A vast number of Out castes were baptized in the Latin Church of Kerala in 1571. They belonged to lower classes such as Pulayas, Ezhavas, Mucuas etc. they were integrated with Latin Catholics.
- **Westernization:** The Portuguese missionaries asked the converts to adopt Portuguese names, as well as Portuguese surnames, even the western way of dressing.
- **Mass Conversion:** During the civil war that broke out between the Paravas and Muslims, the Portuguese held the territory of the Paravas. As a result, 20,000 of them embraced Christianity. The Portuguese conversion was largely from Ezhavas of Cochin and in Travancore territories, Mukkuvas(fishermen) and castes inferior to them as the Pulayas (predial slaves). The Portuguese male converted marriages with Paravas women.
- **Caste Problem in conversion:** Because of Caste system, many high caste Hindus did not embrace Christianity. Once converted they were outcaste from their families and society. That made them live with the Portuguese; if they left the Portuguese they would have been reduced to the state of the untouchables and social standing would become almost impossible.

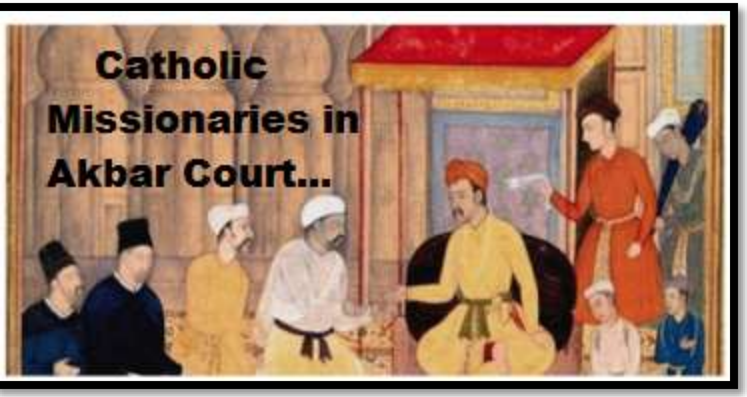
The Madurai Mission by Robert-De-Nobile(1577-1656)

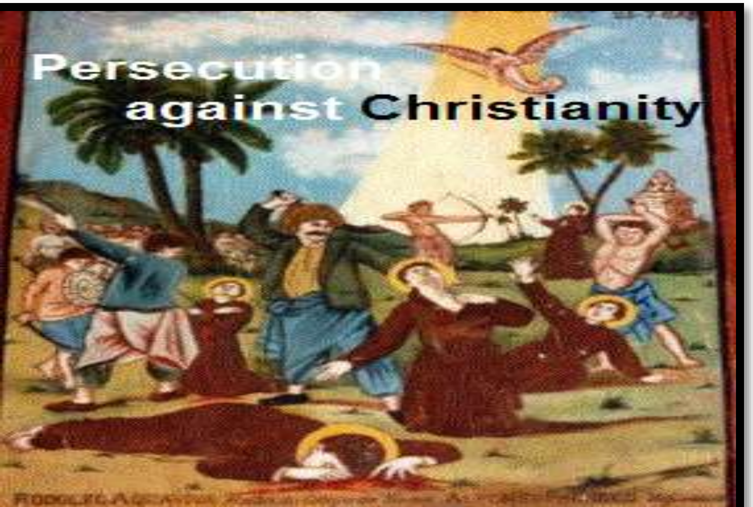


- **Paranghi Markkam:** Robert-De-Nobili, a Jesuit Missionary came to Madurai, India in 1608. The High caste Hindus called the missionaries Parangi, and they called Christianity as Paranghi Markkam, because they saw that Christians did not observe the caste system, and they ate beef and pork, which only the untouchables did.
- **Inculturation:** Nobili found out that Christianity would have little success in India if it kept to its western grab and refused to understand the mind and thought of the people of the country. So, he laid the foundation of inculturation. For the sake of gospel, he gave up his black Cassock, eating Pork and beef and wore saffron dress shaved his hair close to the skull, made a rectangular mark on his forehead, discarded his leather shoes and wore wooden sandals. He kept Kudumbi and put the sacred thread(attached with a small Cross). He set up an "Ashram" in Madurai, called himself a Roman Brahmin.
- **Bible as Fifth Veda:** Nobili extracted from approved commentaries of the Hindu and made an attempted to compile a book in which he could show that Christianity was a religion which crowned the Hindu Vedas. He claimed the Bible was the "Fifth Veda". He was able to convert many high caste Hindus. Robert-De-Nobili was called as the Father of Indian Christian Theologian. He was known as the apostle of the Brahmins.

Catholic Mission among the Moghul in India in 16th Century

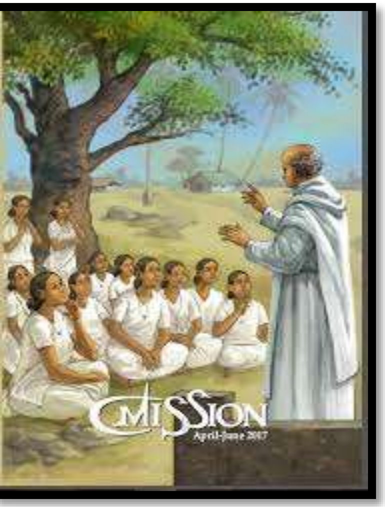


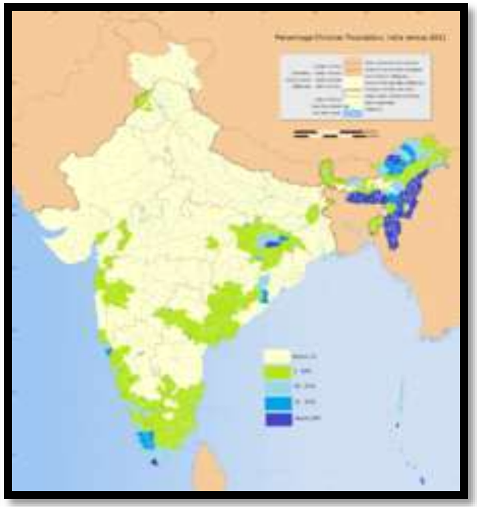


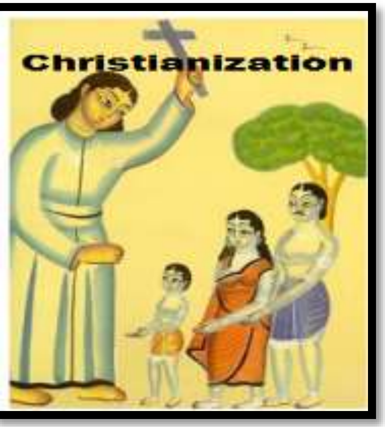


- **Akbar(1556-1605):** The Moghul Emperor Akbar invited Christian missionaries to acquaint himself better with Christianity. At the invitation of Akbar, 3 Jesuit missionaries arrived at Akbar court in February 1580
- **Mission to Moghul:** They explained the tenets of the Christian faith to the King. They had been granted full liberty to preach and make converts. They had expected Akbar to become a Christian but he drew back, but he showed his dislike for Islam. So, the Jesuits returned to Goa in 1583. Akbar invited them again and again.
- **Din-Ilahi:** Akbar founded a new religion as Din-i-llah in 1582, incorporating elements drawn from all religions faiths in his kingdom, with himself as its head.
- **Christianity in Moghul Empire:** The missionaries opened a school which was attended by the sons of nobles and by members of the royal family. Akbar went so far as to adopt the son of a Christian, known as Mirza Sikander. By the end of the 16th century, the Jesuit had founded a number of churches at Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Patna.
- **Decline of Christianity in North India:** The rise of Muslim political power with the exception of Akbar's reign led to a period of vast religious persecution and intolerance. against Christianity. Under Muslim rule many of them were converted to Islam. It is the beginning of the decline of Christianity in North India.

The Christian Communities in Other Parts of India:

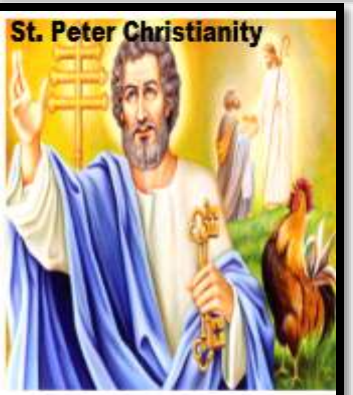


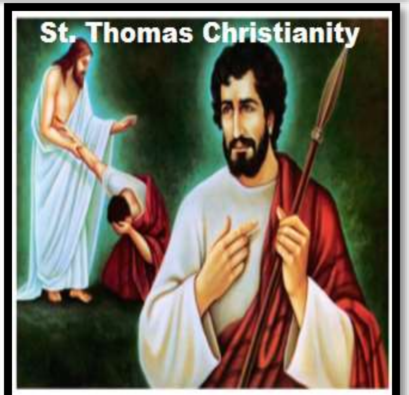




- **North West India**: The extent of Christianity was not limited to Kerala and the Coromandel Coast. The gospel were first preached in the kingdom of Gundaphrous in the North West of India and in the neighbouring places. The rock inscriptions still bear witness to a settlement of Syrian Christians in Jammu(Leh) and Kashmir.
- **North India**: The Christian traveller Cosmos (6th Century) in his Topography speaks of Christians in Bombay, Malabar(Kerala) and Sri Lanka. It proves the existence of numerous Christian communities among the Central Asian people and India.
- **Central India**: Marco Polo(1280s) states that there were six great kingdoms in the Central India, and three of these were Christians and three Saracens (Muslim). Syrian Christian communities were scattered along the west coast, in Goa (Bassein, Bardez, Salsette), Maharastra (Chaul, Thana, Bandra, Nalla Sopara), Gujarat (Baruch) and Sind (Pakistan).
- **Christianization of the Portuguese Territories**: The coastal districts of Karnataka (Manglaore) and Andhra Pradesh (Masulipatnam), Maharashtra (Bassein, Bombay) and Gujarat (Chaul, Daman, Diu, Surat), Orissa (Balasore, Pipli), Bengal (Dacca, Hooghly) etc. At the end of 17th century total number of Christians were near about 7,50,00 in India.

Conflict between St. Thomas and St. Peter Christians in Kerala





- **Rift between St. Thomas and St. Peter Christians:** Initially St. Thomas Christians expressed their Christian solidarity with St. Peter Christians (western). But the tensions began to mount gradually as more and more by St. Peter missionaries started dealing with the St. Thomas Christians since 1516.
- **Break the Tie up:** The Portuguese Christians urges St. Thomas Christians, that Latin form of Christianity was the true Christianity. They told them to give up their customs and practices, both social and ecclesiastical from the contact of East-Syrian Church, which had been exist for many centuries. St. Thomas Christians never imagine that only the Latin form of Christianity was the true Christianity.
- **West views on East:** The Western Christians considered the East-Syrian Persian Church as "Heresy and Schematics" since 5th Century for its Christological heresies. They had separated from the Church of Rome and professed a faith different from the Orthodox one of the West, the Nestorian faith.
- **The Portuguese Authority:** The Portugal King Manuel I wanted to reform Indian Christians along western, Roman line. He wanted to bring St. Thomas Christians with their priests under the obedience of the Portuguese and to follow the Latin Rite rather Syrian worship.

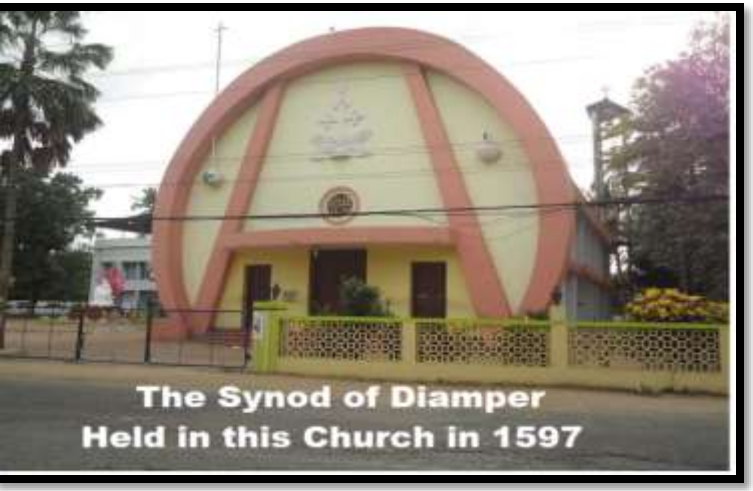
The Relationship of Western and Eastern Authorities in India

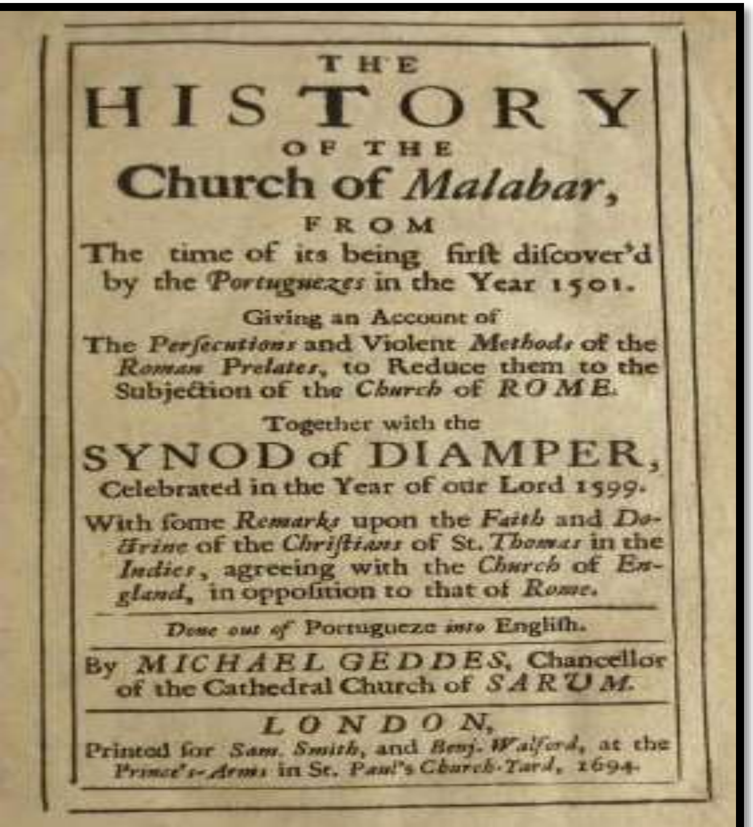
- **Friends:** Initially the rise of Islam, the repeated attempts of the crusades, and the attempts at reunion with Eastern Christendom resulted in bringing the East and West into closer contact with each other. But the East-Syrian Bishops was an obstacle for the Portuguese interested in the St. Thomas Christians.
- **Cranganore Seminary:** The Franciscan missionaries established Cranganore seminary in 1541 to train the native clergy in the spirit of the Latin Church .It was necessary to win over the conservative of St. Thomas Christians into the Latin and Portuguese obedience.
- **Mar Jacob:** He was the Eastern-Syrian Bishop over forty thousand St. Thomas Christians. He was a man of peace and was ready to compromise on some minor matters for the sake of peace. He appreciated the work of Catholic priests, and their religious knowledge in the Latin practices. He allowed them to teach St. Thomas Christians and sent sons of his Christians to be taught by the Cranganore Seminary.
- **Financial Support:** The Portugal King gently persuaded Mar Jacob to accept his allowance and agree to work together for Christ. Mart Jacob accepted his financial aids, without aware of the full implications. Among these East Syrian bishops, Mar Jacob the last one, to led the St. Thomas Christians till his death in 1552.

The Arrival of First Catholic Archbishop in India

- **Death of last Mar Abraham:** The Catholic missionaries considered that the East-Syrian Bishops was an obstacle for the Portuguese interested in the St. Thomas Christians. So they consistently tried to keep out any bishops coming from the East. Some had come disguised, but they were caught and subjected to tortured or forced embrace Roman Catholicism so that they might become helpful in achieving the Romanization of the Church of St. Thomas. The last among them Mar Abraham, the last Metropolitan bishop of St. Thomas Christians died in 1597.
- **Alexes-De-Menzes:** He came to Goa in 1595 as the first Catholic Archbishop of India. The Portuguese priests wanted the Archbishop of Goa as the only bishop of all the St. Thomas Christians.
- **The Mission of Alexes-De-Menezes:** He lead a powerful campaign to achieve his goal. Within the space of a few months Menezes gained the confidence of the petty princes who had been induced to believe that the Archbishop of Goa had the intention of fully subjecting all Christians to the Portuguese, and thus removing them from the authority of their traditional leaders under the pretext of submitting them to the Pope. In Indian Christian memory, Alexes-de-Menezes remains a villainous symbol of European imperialism in India.

The Historical Event of the Synod of Diamper in Kerala

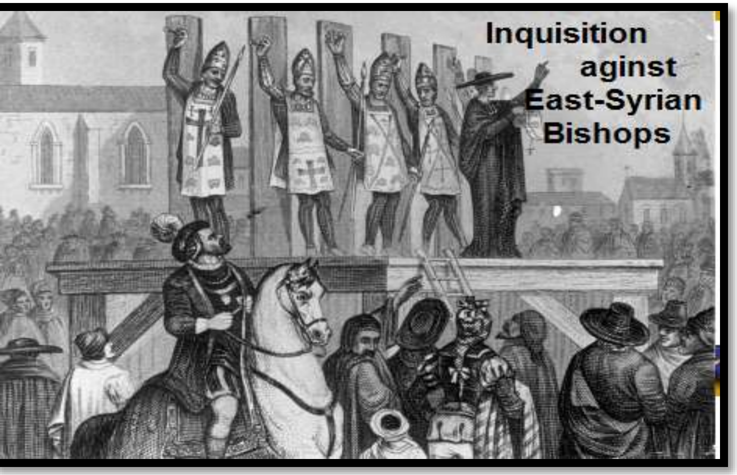


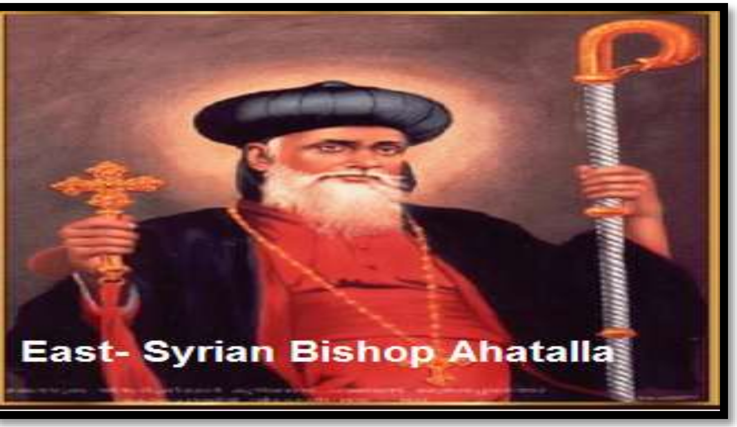


THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Church of *Malabar*,
FROM
The time of its being firſt diſcover'd by the *Portuguezes* in the Year 1501.
Giving an Account of
The *Perſecutions* and Violent *Methods* of the *Roman Prelates*, to Reduce them to the Subjection of the *Church* of *ROME*.
Together with the
SYNOD of DIAMPER,
Celebrated in the Year of our Lord 1599.
With ſome *Remarks* upon the *Faith* and *Doctrine* of the *Chriſtians* of St. *Thomas* in the *Indies*, agreeing with the *Church* of *England*, in oppoſition to that of *Rome*.
Done out of Portugueze *into* Engliſh.
By *MICHAEL GEDDES*, Chancellor of the Cathedral Church of *SARUM*.
LONDON,
Printed for *Sam. Smith*, and *Benj. Walford*, at the *Prince's-Arms* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard*, 1694.

- **Call for a meeting:** The Archbishop Alexis-de-Menezes visited Malabar in 1599. He wanted to bring all the St. Thomas Christians under the authority of the Pope. He was able to secure the submission of St. Thomas Church highest hierarchy Archdeacon George. They organized the Synod of Diamper on 20th June, 1599 to settle the theological and liturgical differences between St. Peter and St. Thomas Christianity.
- **The Synod:** 152 priests and 662 laymen and Archdeacon George attended from St. Thomas Church. The Catholic Archbishop Menzes carefully prepared the decrees to replace local by Roman customs and was passed and signed by both authorities. There were 267 decrees passed at the synod by threats and terrorizing methods, as described by Menzes and his caucus.
- **Synod declaration:** The East-Syrian Church patriarchs were declared to be a schematic and a heretic. Many Syric books containing Nestorian ideas were burned. Finally, the authority of the Inquisition of Goa was extended to the St. Thomas Christians. With these decrees, the ancient Church of St. Thomas Christians, as an independent church, had simply ceased to exist.
- **Merger:** The Synod of Diamper finally brought St. Thomas Christians into the Catholic union which was a turning point in the history of the Church of Malabar.

The Impact of the Synod of Diamper



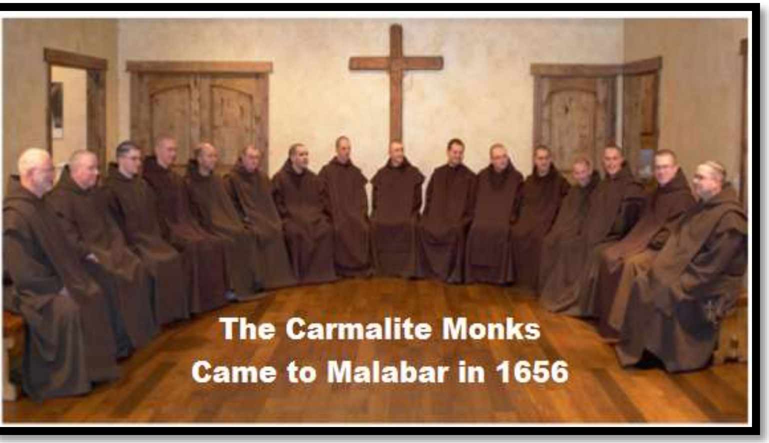


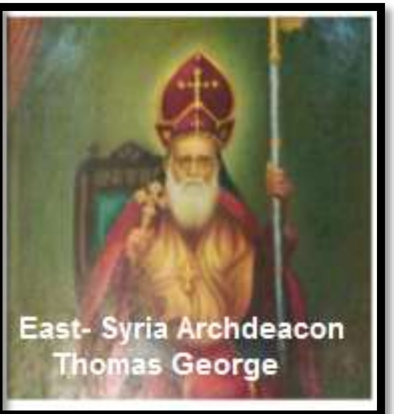
- **The Consequences**: After the synod these events followed immediately: Appointment of a Latin bishop over the Church of St. Thomas, Suppression of the Metropolitan status of Angamali and making it subordinate to Goa and the **Padroado** of the Portuguese was extended over the Thomas Christians to their obedience in Malabar.
- **Letter to Patriarchs**: The unwilling St. Thomas Christians vindicated their ancient faith by requesting the Patriarch of Egypt at Cairo, the Nestorian Patriarch of Babylon and the Jacobite Patriarch at Antioch for a bishop to be sent to Malabar. As per their request the Patriarch of Babylon sent Bishop Ahatalla to Malabar in 1562.
- **Execution of Bishop Ahatalla**: Out of hostility, Ahatalla was made captive by the Portuguese at Mylapore. From detention, he was brought to Cochin in chains on his way to Goa be sent away or imprisoned. The Archdeacon and St. Thomas Christians reacted by asking the release of Ahatalla. But, all appeals for his release failed.
- **In a Fit of Rage**: The news spread that the bishop Ahatalla had been drowned by the Portuguese. So, more than 25,000 St. Thomas Christians, priests and Archdeacon Thomas George marched to Cochin. But the fort was closed against them and the Catholic Archbishop refused to meet them. So, the tension mounted and reached its apex.

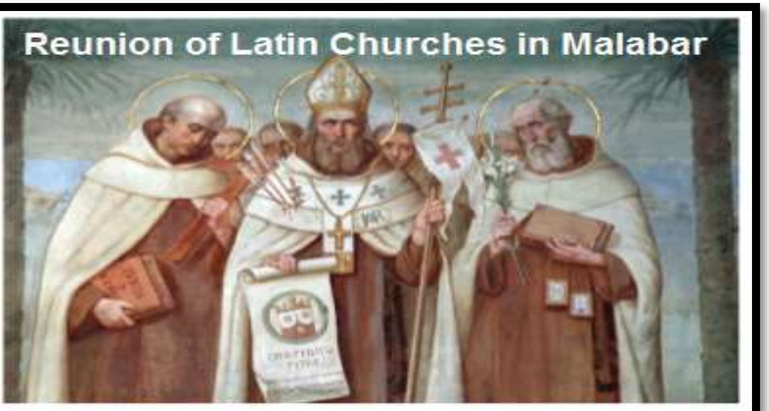
The Revolt: Coonan Cross Oath

- **The Revolt**: Though St. Thomas Christians tolerated a Latin bishop with much heart-burning, they remained very much attached to their centuries-old hierarchical, liturgical and social customs and tradition. The disappointed St. Thomas Christians were roused to such a fury that they broke into revolt against Roman Catholic administration leads to the famous Coonen Kurusu (Coonan Cross) Oath on 3 January 1563.
- **Coonan Cross Oath**: St. Thomas Christians went to inside the Church at Mattanchetty, Kochi and in front of a crucifix with lighted candles and over the holy gospels. A rope was tied to the open air Cross, so that all could touch at least that rope when the oath was being made. They assembled at the slanting Cross and took a pledge and vowed that they would reject the Roman Catholic Church and not to receive any bishop except the one sent by the patriarch of Babylon.
- **Division**: The Coonan Cross Oath lead to the division of those who returned to the Syrian rite and those who accepted the Latin rites of Portuguese. It was a powerful expression of the will and determination of the Thomas Christians, who wanted to re-establish their freedom, identity, dignity and venerable heritage rejecting all things imposed upon them by colonial powers, ecclesiastical and political.

Reunion Movement by Carmelite Mission in Kerala

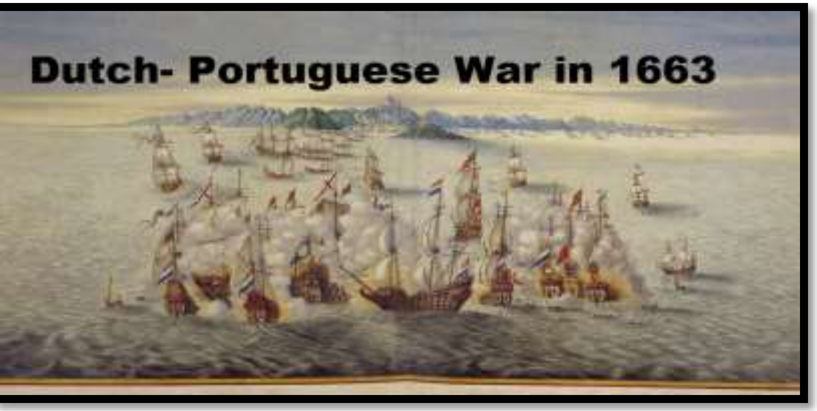






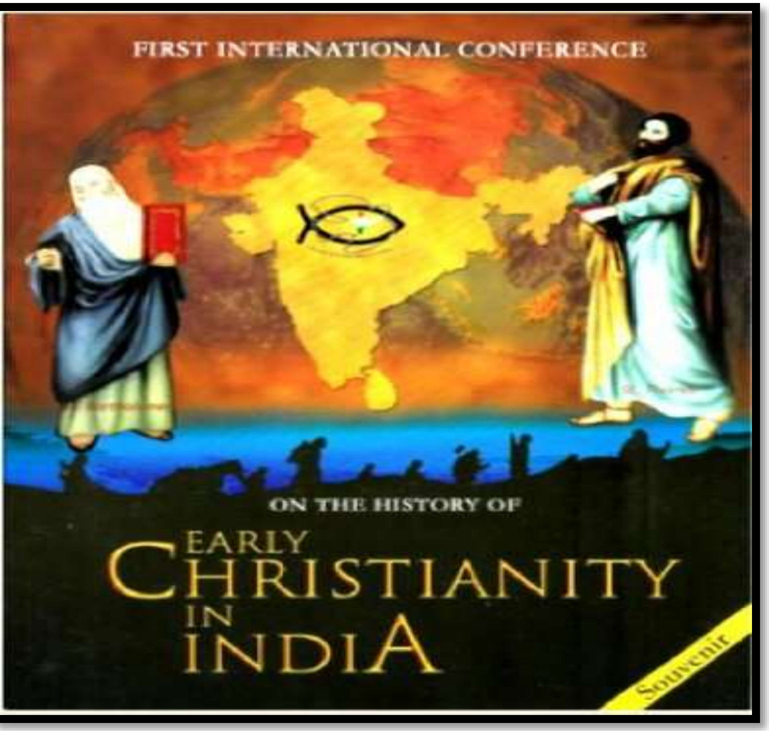
- Supremacy of Archdeacon:. As the news of the Coonan cross oath spread, all the Syrians except a few people were ready to co-operate with the Roman Catholic Church Supremacy. The whole body of the Thomas Christians joined together against **Roman Catholic Bishop Garzia** and recognized **East-Syrian Archdeacon Thomas** as their supreme head of the St. Thomas Churches.
- Crisis in Malabar: The Catholic Bishop Garzia tried to bring St. Thomas community under his control. But his efforts were in vain. So, he appealed to Rome for help in resolving the crisis. Hence the Pope sends Carmelites missionaries to Malabar to try and heal the Schism.
- Carmelites Mission: They came to Malabar for the work of reconciliation in 1656. They made good use of local kings support by colonial power, lent their political and economic support. They forcefully entered into churches of the Thomas Christians and took control of them. They settle the dispute and brought harmony between the St. Thomas Christians and their Jesuit Archbishop of Cranganore. By 1662, 56 churches were reunited once again with Rome and 33 still remained aloof, under the leadership of East-Syrian Archdeacon Thomas. Thus 2/3 of the Churches of St. Thomas Christians of 1, 30,000 were once again brought under the control of Rome.

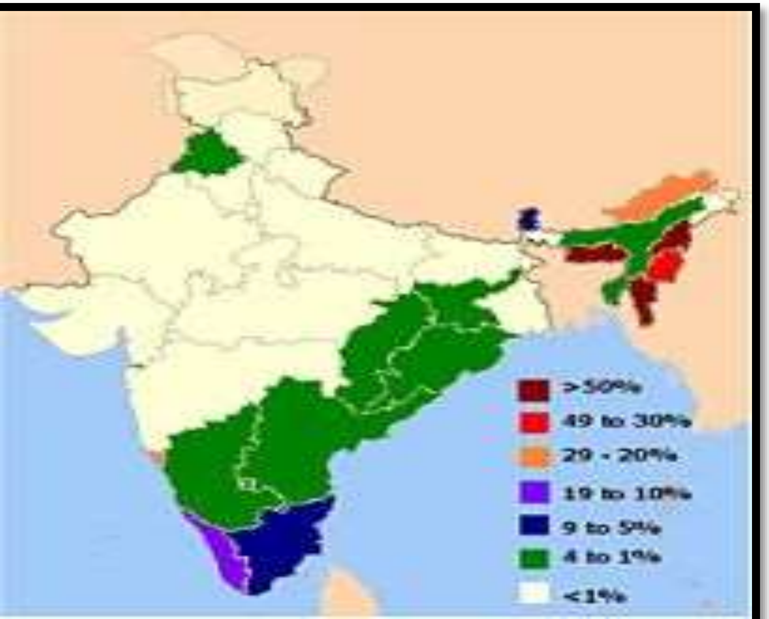
The Fall of Portuguese & the Dawn of Dutch Colonialism



- **Collapse of Monopoly**: Throughout the 16th century the Portuguese maintained their power and influence in Kerala, but in the middle of the 17th century saw the collapse of the Portuguese monopoly in the east by the growth of Dutch..
- **Dawn of Dutch**: The Dutch (Holland) captured from Portuguese several important places like Tittucurin, Nagappatanam, Quilon, Cochin and Malabar between 1657-63; finally they had surrender to Dutch in 1663, which resulted in diminished royal patronage of Portuguese..
- **Decline of Portuguese**: The fall of Portuguese reign in India was a major setback for the Catholic missionaries, because the Dutch were very anti-Catholic. One of the first things they did was to expel all the Catholic missionaries from Kerala. The Portuguese interest in missionary and ecclesiastical progress began to decay it the end of 17th century.
- **Dutch Colonialism and Mission**: The Dutch (Holland) had no interest on spreading the Christian faith in India. They considered evangelization and Christian mission politically and economically unprofitable as their main concerned was on trade and commerce. The fortunes of the church were much affected by the changing of politics in India.

Conclusion





- **Early Christianity in India:** Christianity came to India as early as the first century after Christ long before Europe turned to it and established a firm foothold in South India. The Christian message is claimed to have been brought to India by St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew, two Apostles of Jesus Christ. But the evidence for this claim is just a tradition, not described directly or in detail but alluded to in passing, in some ancient literary works while writing about other things. There is no documentary evidence to help arrive at any precise knowledge.
- **Historical Evidence** No early Indian has ever written the history of the Church of India. The evidence outside of India constitutes only imperfect, disconnected, and scattered pieces of evidence. There are solid grounds, however, for believing that a fairly large Christian community existed in India from very early times.
- **Indian Church History:** There is very little record information available about the Indian church till the16th century. The earliest of these records of tradition do not go beyond the beginning of the third century. Just before the arrival of the Portuguese, Christianity was practically confined to Kerala from the early centuries up to the 16th Century. But there is one fact which emerges from this period that it is in connection with the church of the East-Syrian Persian Church.

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